

Acu News

"A kind word warms for three winters." - Chinese Proverb

KIDNEYS IN BALANCE: ACTIVITY & REST IN THE COLDER MONTHS

Winter is kidney season! Kidneys are, in many ways, the alpha and omega of Chinese medicine organ theory, as they manage development and decline and therefore both life and death. They are also considered the root source of our energy. Essence, or jing qi, is the energy we receive at conception (also called prenatal qi). The kidneys are like a battery that is not rechargeable. Throughout our lives we slowly deplete this reserve. How fast it gets depleted depends on our lifestyle, environment etc.

Rechargeable energy (postnatal qi) comes from the food we eat and the air we breathe. It is vital to supply the body with sufficient postnatal qi so as to not deplete our reserve essence that is needed for proper kidney function. According to TCM, kidneys guide growth and development, and support the health of our brains, bones, bladder, ears and reproductive system. They also govern our low back and knees.

Winter is the time to be very mindful of our kidneys as it is when our energy can be most easily depleted. Winter is the ultimate yin time, and calls for rest, reflection, conservation, and storage. Days are shorter while nights are longer. This is nature telling us to get more sleep. Your body responds to less sunlight by producing more melatonin in the winter, the hormone that helps us rest. If

we do not adjust to the season, we can easily get burnt out. Consider your adrenal health when thinking about avoiding burnout, as those little glands that sit on top of your kidneys are, in part, responsible for what TCM considers kidney qi. The cold of winter presents an additional challenge too, as the adrenal glands, together with your kidneys have to work extra hard in helping to regulate body temperature.

The bottom line when it comes to kidney health in winter is to recognize the need for rest (and don't just disguise it with stimulants like coffee!). Extreme exercise and activity is contraindicated. That being said, with the cold of winter slowing things down to a near halt, gentle exercise like yoga, stretching, tai chi, and qi gong are perfect movement therapies to prevent winter stagnation.

Don't be afraid to get some fresh air and sunlight when possible too! The morning is the ideal time to get out and go for a walk when winter weather permits. Dress appropriately but soak up as much Vitamin D as you can. It is essential for immunity, mood, bone health etc. And if you are looking to slim down, take note that exercising in cold weather actually helps to transform white fat (belly and thigh fat) into calorie burning brown fat. If you can't get outside in the morning start your day with this simple qi gong exercise: (you can gently awaken your qi with a stretch session first).

Let your acupuncturist give your kidneys some love this winter too! With treatments to support kidney function and preserve essence, your acupuncturist can help you relax into the specific balance you need to thrive in the colder months.

Signs and symptoms of kidney deficiency or depletion include:

- Developmental disorders, congenital issues in children (essence deficiency)
- Premature aging: greying
- Deafness
- Weak brittle bones, hair/teeth loss
- Infertility
- Low Back Pain, weak knees
- Extreme fatigue (can happen when both the rechargeable energy is depleted and the battery is low)

Knocking on the Door of Life - Awaken your Qi Gong Exercise:

- With feet hip length apart and knees slightly bent.
- Slowly swing torso left to right, letting the head follow.
- Let arms and hands percuss the front lower abdomen and lower back as you let the natural momentum take over.
- Finish with a stimulating rub on the lower back to send some love into those kidneys.

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