

Patient Help Sheet

Digestive Health and Water Retention

Here are some tips that you can use to help balance and support your health during this time. Please feel free to call me if you have further questions or concerns.

"Quiet thoughts mend the body." - Chinese Proverb

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Digestive Health and Water Retention

It is a serious problem when digestion is not functioning optimally. The digestive system has the essential function of transforming our food into nutrients, and then transporting the nutrients around the body. If the system is impaired over time, it can lead to bloating, dampness and water retention as the system just isn't strong enough to transform fluids appropriately. Acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine can be very helpful at regulating digestion to treat the water retention.

Additionally, here are some things you can do on your own to help your body fight and fix the problem.

Acupressure Points

Stomach 36 Located on the lateral side of the shin, one finger width lateral to the shin bone, and four finger widths down from the eyes of the knee. This point is an excellent point for nourishing the Qi of your digestive system.

Spleen 6 Located on the medial side of the lower leg, four finger widths up from the medial malleolus (ankle bone), on the border of the tibia. Spleen 6 works in conjunction with Stomach 36 to strengthen Qi and blood, boost digestive function and transform dampness.

Spleen 9 Located on the medial side of the lower leg, in a depression below the knee where the tibia flares outward like a fan. It is most likely sore if you palpate in the area. Spleen 9 is the best point on the body to overcome dampness and fluid accumulation.

Conception Vessel 12 Located on the midline of the abdomen, halfway between the belly button and the point where your ribs join together at the base of the sternum. This is a point that strongly nourishes the digestive Qi.

Foods

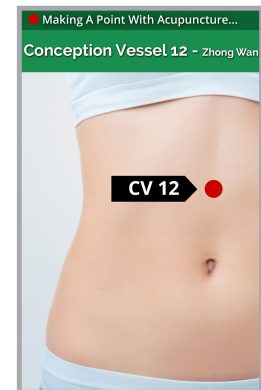
- Reduce dairy intake
- Eat digestion-nourishing foods, such as whole grains, cooked vegetables and lean meats
- Include pungent and spicy flavors in your meals - the spice helps the break up dampness and water accumulation in the body. Examples include onions, garlic, leeks and pepper
- Limit sugar intake (very important!)
- Avoid cold or raw foods and instead opt for cooked, warm or room-temperature foods and beverages

Herbs

Chinese herbs are most effective when prescribed in a formula by an acupuncturist. But in addition to taking an herbal formula, some single herbs can be brewed by themselves to make a tea that can help to strengthen digestion and reduce water retention and dampness.

Seed of Job's Tears/Coix Seed

This is a common food-grade herb to "resolve dampness," which is the pathology that leads to water retention from a poor digestive function. Called Yi Yi Ren in Chinese, this herb both nourishes digestion and cuts through the accumulation.



Dried Tangerine Peel

This herb, called Chen Pi in Chinese, circulates energy in the digestive system to treat symptoms such as bloating, indigestion, cramping and water retention.

Ginger

Fresh Ginger nourishes the digestive energy and reduces toxicity of food or other herbs to reduce side effects. Ginger gently warms the digestive process. The warming nature can also help cut through some of the fluid build-up in the body.

Other Lifestyle Suggestions

Exercise! This will help to circulate the body's Qi, which in turn can help to move some of the retained water, as well as improve digestion and metabolism.

If you don't already, begin taking a probiotic.

Get back to nature. The digestive system, in Traditional Chinese Medicine, is related to the Earth. Anything you can do to connect you with the Earth energy will be healing for the digestion. Go for a walk or a run in the woods. Sit outside on the grass and meditate. Go hiking. Stand barefoot in the dirt.