

Seasons & Wellbeing

by Indira Mariappan

Greetings!

We can't imbue too much importance into unifying our connection to nature and the seasons for our health and the health of this earth.

WINTER

This is the time when nature retreats into slumber and returns to its deepest source. Likewise, to be in harmony with this season, we need to emphasise this principle and become more receptive, introspective and storage orientated. The cold and darkness encourage us to warm the body's core and to seek inner warmth. This is a time to rest, meditate deeply, refine the spiritual essence and store physical energy. However, we must stay active enough to keep the spine and joints flexible.

Water

The winter season corresponds to the water element. This in turn influences the health of the kidneys, adrenal glands and the bladder.

This kidney energy is regarded in traditional medicine as the basic vigour of life. It is the root and foundation of the body's vital force. Where the kidney energy is compromised, the body will tend towards weakness, chronic illness, premature aging and low creative and reproductive energy.

The emotion associated with the Water element is fear. A little healthy fear protects us. In excess, however it fosters a general insecurity about life and weakens the vitality of the kidneys. Weak kidneys generate fearful feelings which in turn block loving and joyful experiences.

The person with vital kidney energy is active yet calm, courageous but gentle, accomplishes much without stress and balances assertive action with nurture.

So, there is great incentive to support, strengthen and protect our kidney energy and spend it wisely!

Nourishing Tips for Winter

Slow food!

Longer slower cooking methods with less water will produce more warming meals than quicker methods. A stew for instance will be more warming if it is cooked slowly than if it is cooked quickly. So enjoy lots of stews, roasts and baked meals!

Salty and bitter: flavours for the cold season. Such foods are appropriate for winter as they promote a sinking and centring quality. Use only small amounts of celtic sea salt, as an excess of this flavour causes coldness and weakens the heart. Salty foods include miso, seaweeds, millet and barley.



"In a way winter is the real spring, the time when the inner things happen, the resurge of nature."

Edna O'Brien

Include watercress, endives, turnips, alfalfa, quinoa and amaranth to bring some bitter flavours into your diet. Roasted ground chicory root is a lovely warming drink to incorporate into your winter regime.

Foods considered warming and harmonising for this time of the year:

- **Grains:** millet, buckwheat, wheat, black rice
- **Beans:** adzuki beans, black beans, black soya beans, black lentils
- **Vegetables:** alfalfa sprouts, kale, leek, parsnip, scallion, watercress, sea vegetables
- **Fruit:** blackberries, mulberries, papaya
- **Nuts:** chestnuts, walnuts, black sesame seeds
- **Spices:** cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, dry ginger, fenugreek, nutmeg
- **Beverages:** red wine (small amounts!), roasted chicory root. Avoid drinking and eating anything cold or frozen
- **Seafood:** mussels, oysters, salmon, trout (ideally) from uncontaminated sources
- **Meat:** beef, lamb, chicken, turkey (all in moderation and preferably organic)

Stocks are a wonderful way of adding flavour and making soups. When making bone stocks, use organic or biodynamic animal bones. Adding a tablespoonful of wine or vinegar draws out the minerals from the bones and improves the nourishing quality of the stock.

Fish stock made with fish head and bones is mineral rich especially in iodine and is a great restorative.

Adding agar-agar or a strip of kombu to vegetable stocks enhances their nutrient value.

Stay Warm, Slow Down, Rest!

Wrap up and wear a hat! If you get too chilly you are more susceptible to injuries in the lower back, hips, legs and feet.

So keep your wrists, ankles, fingers, toes and especially the back of the neck protected from the cold.

Overall the immune system is a bit weaker due to the stress it undergoes from warding off illness.

So this is the time of the year when more rest and nurturing is needed to restore and maintain our health.

Massage

Take a minute a few times during the day. Briskly rub your hands together to generate warmth in the palms. Place your warm palms on the lower back and feel the warmth penetrate your kidney area. Gently massage this area. This is a simple and enjoyable way to support your kidneys.

From time to time apply hot fomentations on the back, abdomen and joints as this helps blood circulation and energy flow preventing seasonal joint aches.

Exercise

The essential energetic theme of this season is depth and stillness. It is the time to engage in exercises that build deep strength provided your general health is in good order.

When you are hiking for instance, pick a shorter route that is steep and challenging! If you run, then run shorter distances at faster speeds.

The practice of yoga in winter incorporates asanas which generate

heat by vigorous movements and strong stretches. This encourages fluidity in body and mind and combats stiffness and fear.

Meditation is easiest during this time of the year! Pick a quiet time, keep warm and have a go for a short while everyday during winter surprise yourself!

Natural medicines

Herbal tonics individually formulated are a great support during winter. They can assist in recovery from lingering winter ailments. Those who suffer ailments during spring are strongly advised to begin their natural medicine protocols now. This is an optimal time to deeply strengthen and support the body with natural foods and medicines.

Rest and Restore!

In good health and happiness.



Indira Mariappan
BPharm ND

Consultations:
SeasonsHealth.com.au



Interesting reading:

Dance and Drama in Bali by Walter Spies & Beryl de Zoete

The Brain that Changes Itself by Norman Doidge

Chakra Meditation by Swami Saradananda