

Seasons & Wellbeing

by Indira Mariappan



Greetings!

Spring is a time of new beginnings and a wonderful opportunity to plant the seeds of good health for the coming year. Now is the time to rise early with the sun and enjoy a brisk walk!

One cannot help but notice the vigour and vitality of plant growth. The sight of green and tender young plants nourishes the soul through the eyes. The appetite for food decreases and the body naturally cleanses itself. Follow the rhythms of nature and the seasons and allow yourself to see things in new ways!

Spring

This season begins with the spring equinox in September, where day and night are equal and ends with the longest day of the year in December.

This is a time of renewal after the winter slumber. In general, spring is the time when all natural energy moves upward and outward. We experience this same pattern within our bodies. Our creativity, vitality, repressed emotions and stored residues all begin to express themselves in spring.

Wood

Spring corresponds to the Wood element in TCM, which relates to the liver and gall bladder. The liver is perhaps the most congested of all organs in each of us. Too much fat, chemicals, intoxicants and denatured food contribute towards disrupting hundreds of biochemical processes of the liver.

One of the first signs of liver disharmony is emotional difficulty related to anger: impatience, frustration, aggression, violence, resentment, belligerence, rudeness, arrogance, and an impulsive and/or explosive personality. When these emotions are repressed without an opportunity for transformation, then depression can follow.

In traditional medicine, a healthy liver is considered vital to establishing a smooth and soothing flow of energy through the whole person—in both body and mind. It controls the amount of tension and relaxation in the body, and nourishes the eyes, nails and the tendons. The liver also governs the female menstrual system.

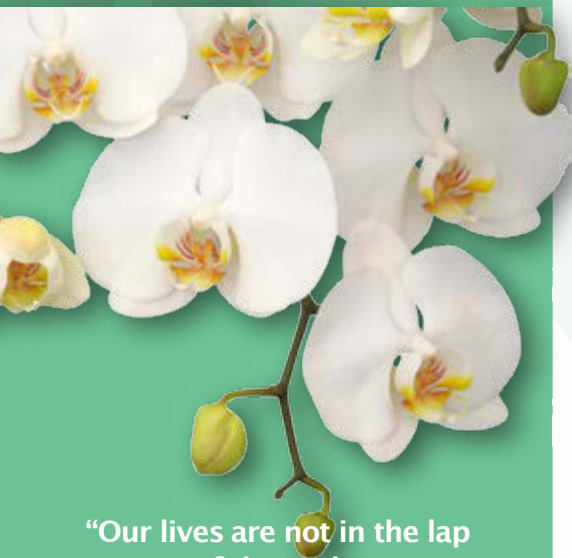
People with vital livers are calm; they also have unerring judgement and are able to express themselves fully. Positive emotions associated with the liver are hope, faith, trust, creativity, direction and the ability to effectively process stress and relax.

So, there are plenty of reasons to attend to our liver health all year round and especially during spring!

Spring Health Tips!

Less is more! Eat less and lighter.

Spring is when we naturally eat less to cleanse the body of the fats and heavy foods of winter. The diet should be the lightest of the year and contain foods which emphasize the ascending and expansive qualities of spring – young plants, fresh greens, sprouts and immature wheat or other cereal grasses.



“Our lives are not in the lap
of the gods,
but in the lap of our cooks.”
Lin Yutang

Raw food and renewal

Raw and sprouted food can be emphasized as they stimulate the energy flow of a stagnant liver and have a cleansing and cooling quality.

Spring, the first season of the year, represents youth. Raw foods are thought to bring about renewal by reminding the body of the earlier, more youthful stages of our development.

Most people do well taking at least a little raw food daily, with greater amounts in spring and summer. Nevertheless, there are limitations; raw food in excess can weaken the digestion and should not be used at all if there is bowel inflammation. Raw food must be used cautiously in individuals with signs of weakness and deficiency and who are sensitive to the cold.

Quick cooking

During spring, food is best cooked for a shorter time at higher temperatures. When cooking with oil, a quick high temperature sauté method is appropriate. When cooking with water, a light steaming or minimal simmering is ideal.

Pungent flavour

(includes acrid, spicy, hot and aromatic flavours)

This flavour in alliance with the sweet flavour of natural whole foods attunes us to spring. It stimulates digestion, improves sluggish liver function, disperses mucus (thus offering protection against the common cold), stimulates blood circulation and is cardiotoxic. Include and enjoy these flavours often in your cooking!

Pungent seeds such as cumin, coriander, fennel, dill, anise and caraway relax the nervous system as well as improving digestion. Other warming pungents include spearmint, rosemary, garlic and all members of the onion family, cinnamon bark and branch, cloves, fresh and dried ginger root, black pepper, all hot peppers, cayenne, basil and nutmeg. Some of these are not suitable when people are hot, dry or weak.

Those who are overweight from overeating should emphasise cooling pungents: e.g. peppermint, marjoram, elder flowers, white pepper and radish and its leaves.

Sour taste

This taste is most active in the liver and needs to be balanced with pungent flavours. A squeeze of lemon or lime in a glass of warm water taken each morning is a great start to the morning before a brisk walk!

Foods considered harmonising during spring include:

grains: spelt, oats, rye

beans: mung and lima, lentils

vegetables: young beets, carrots, broccoli, kale, leeks, parsley, alfalfa and mung bean sprouts, mustard greens, radish, daikon radish, spinach and all other seasonal green foods

fruit: limes, lemons, grapefruit, green apples, papaya.

Exercise

The basic energetic theme in spring is rising energy.

The best kinds of exercise are those that get the energy moving, encourage deep breathing, stretch the muscles and tendons and work up a good sweat!

When hiking, walk briskly on flatter trails for longer distances. If you run, then run further at a slower pace.

Yoga postures incorporated at this time of the year regularise digestion, clear congestion and boost the immune system.

Gentle stretching exercises stimulate the tendons which are governed by the liver. By stretching, you relieve stresses that congest the liver, thereby providing an internal massage that supports healthy

liver function. Do spend more time on stretching before enjoying your vigorous spring exercise regime in the morning!

Massage

Dry skin brushing is a great way to cleanse and invigorate the skin and support our lymphatic system during spring. This can be done gently with a soft bristle brush or a natural loofah before showering.

After showering, massage a small amount of jojoba oil all over, always working in the direction towards the heart.

Natural medicines

Hayfever sufferers are certainly helped by all the above suggestions for spring health and liver support. Alongside this, I find homeopathic remedies and key supplements of great assistance to my patients.

Weight loss is greatly assisted by incorporating some of the above suggestions. However, an individualised approach offers specific and longer lasting benefits for your health.

Renew the spring within!

In good health and happiness.

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Consultations:
SeasonsHealth.com.au

Interesting reading:

Gesture of Balance by Tarthang Tulku

The Tao of Healthy Eating by Bob Flaws

Yoga—The Path to Holistic Health by BKS Iyengar

