

Seasons & Wellbeing

by Indira Mariappan



Greetings and Happy New Year!

Summertime is when life is at its most expansive phase. The sun is at its highest and it is nature's season of growth and maturation. Food is abundant and all plant life is full of vital life force. Therefore, allow the bounty of the outside world to enter and enliven us!

The relaxed pace of life at the beginning of the year affords us a perfect opportunity to reflect on the year that has been, as well as allowing us to prepare creatively and joyfully for the year ahead.

Summer

The beginning of summer in December corresponds to the longest day of the year. The sun is considered yang as it gives energy, causes action and outward movement while creating a hot and dry climate. Tounify with this season, we too express this yang principle with expansion, growth, lightness, outward activity, brightness and creativity. So wake early in the morning and reach to the sun for nourishment to flourish as our gardens do!

Fire

Summertime corresponds with the Fire element, which provides the energy governing the heart and small intestines. The heart has to do with the ability to rule, to understand and see clearly, and to serve compassionately. The small intestine functions to receive, digest and assimilate nourishment. It sorts out and extracts the good from what we ingest – physically, mentally and emotionally.

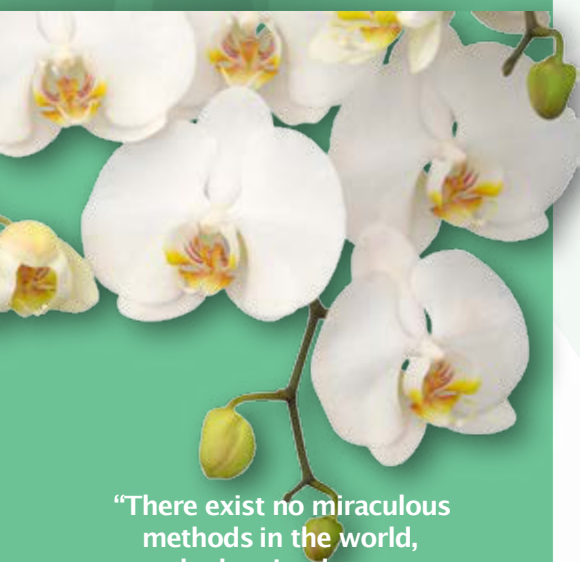
The heart includes not only the organ itself but the concept of the mental and emotional centre reflected in our phrases: "Learn by heart" or "Put your heart into it!" Dr Dean Ornish has developed from his own experience – a similar awareness – when he says, "I think the mind is where heart disease begins for many people."

The heart not only regulates blood circulation but also controls consciousness, spirit, sleep, memory and houses the mind. It is in this way that the heart together with the liver is related to the nervous system and brain.

People with healthy hearts are genuinely friendly. They are also humble as they feel small in comparison to the wonders they perceive with their open hearts and aware minds. Clarity is a central attribute of those with a harmonious heart-mind. They seem to see effortlessly through problems to arrive at brilliant solutions!

An imbalance in the heart-mind is generally reflected by a scattered and confused mind. There can be excess or no laughter as well as speech issues such as excess verbiage and confused speech. Depression, mental illness, memory loss and a weakened spirit are other generalised symptoms of this imbalance.

As the heart relies on the other organs for its nourishment and energy, a majority of heart problems are caused by imbalances in other organ systems. Treatment therefore, involves supporting and balancing those systems. Excess liver function from too much coffee, alcohol, and red meat, stokes the fire



"There exist no miraculous methods in the world, only the simple ones; it is the perfection of the simple that is miraculous."

Fei Boxiong, 1863

element and creates heat. This, however, depletes the body's cooling yin fluids and can lead to problems like inflammation and hypertension which are aggravated in summer. As well as supporting our physical organ systems to heal our hearts, there are specific spirit-clarifying methods which are helpful to incorporate. One such method is the use of speech, which is said to issue from the heart. The condition of the heart is reflected in the awareness of our spoken words. So, by paying attention and improving awareness of our speech, we strengthen the heart (i.e. the scattered mind and its spirit can be collected and organised through mindful speech patterns). Examples of these practices are prayer, meditation, devotional singing, chanting of mantras, affirmations and silent contemplation on uplifting images.

In order for such practices to be beneficial, they need to be done attentively rather than mechanically. Establishing a strong, calm, and clear mind promotes more efficient healing of all organ systems. Having such a mind has many other therapeutic benefits as well –for instance, it enables one to better withstand pain.

When the heart is serene,
Pain seems negligible ...Inner Classic

Nourishing Tips for Summer

Light Diet!

During summer our digestive capacity is lower as our energies are directed outward in accordance with this season. Our diet needs to keep us cool, feeling light and be easily digestible. Nature's abundance of fruits and vegetables during summertime makes it easy for us to follow a seasonal diet! Essentially, eat a diet with more raw or lightly steamed vegetables and fresh fruit, preferably local and certified organic. This will help us feel lighter, aid weight loss and keep our energy strong.

Harmonising foods for summer

- Increase foods with yin qualities (cooling, wet) i.e. fruits and vegetables
- Reduce yang (concentrated, heating) foods such as meat, nuts, beans, eggs, dairy products and whole grains.
- Eat lots of fresh fruit and juices, multi-

coloured salads and vegetables, some seeds, nuts and grains and less meat and dairy products.

- Choose fruits such as apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches, plums, strawberries and citrus fruits such as lemons and limes.
- Choose vegetables such as bitter gourd, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, celery, corn, cucumber, spinach, summer squash, and tomato. Include some sea vegetables too!
- Mung beans in particular are considered cooling. Add to a salad or sprout.
- Sprouts are wonderful additions to meals – especially mung, soy and alfalfa
- Regularly add a little spicy, pungent or even fiery flavour such red or green chillies, cayenne pepper, fresh ginger, horseradish, black pepper, mint and coriander.
- Steam or simmer food as quickly as possible using little salt and more water. Leftover water from cooking can be saved and used the next day in cooking as it is nutritious.
- Drink flower or leaf teas including chrysanthemum, mint and chamomile.
- Drink warm or hot liquids and take warm showers to induce sudden sweating thus cooling the body.
- Avoid iced drinks and ice cream as these cause the stomach to contract and thereby interfere with digestion.
- On very hot days, avoid heavy foods as these cause us to be more sluggish.

Exercise

The optimal kinds of exercise for summer are those that work the body over a sustained period of time, build a vigorous sweat and increase our cardiovascular stamina. Walking, swimming, cycling, yoga, martial arts are all beneficial,

especially if they are performed with an emphasis on building cardiovascular stamina and endurance.

During summer it is best to exercise in the morning (as it is the coolest time of the day) and preferably outdoors. On the very hot days it is best to exercise less vigorously.

Natural Medicine

During summer, I find people are motivated to pay attention to their health and it is an optimal time to address their concerns and initiate change. Our natural energy is at its peak in summer, so it is important that our actions support this increased vitality.

I look forward to attending to your health needs naturally!

In good health and happiness.



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Consultations:
SeasonsHealth.com.au



Interesting reading:

The Spectrum by Dr Dean Ornish

The Heart's Code by Paul Pearshall

Hurry Up and Meditate by David Michie