

In Chinese medicine, winter is not just about adjusting our diet. Of course, it's a time for deep introspection and nurturing our yin energy because winter is a yin season. This specific season is associated with the water element in the five-element theory.

And of course the kidney and the bladder, organ system. Which the kidney itself governs our deepest reserves of energy. Power. Capacity for stillness. And reflection. Think of what water is still, right. Stillness. You look at the lake very still and you can see your reflection into it. It all works so well.

This is why I love TCM. So during the winter month, nature slows down, right? The trees shed their leaves, animals hibernate. We are in Canada and the bears will hibernate under the snow. The world enters a state of restful, quiet. TCM wisdom teaches us to align with the natural rhythm that's around us. Right? So just as the world around us becomes more still. We should embrace a period of great stillness and introspection.

Here are the six key aspects of the TCM approach to winter. Number one. Conserve energy, because winter is a time to conserve our qi and nourish our kidney essence. This means getting more rest, getting to bed earlier before 10 o'clock and waking up later when possible. So, because it's darker longer hours, we should go to bed between nine and 11, but closer to nine and we should not wake up until it's light outside.

So I know that's not always easy, but definitely not before 6:00 AM. To embrace stillness, engaging in quiet, reflective activities like meditation, gentle Qi gong. These practices help us tune into our inner world and cultivate our yin energy. Very important. Three self reflection. I use this time for introspection.

As I said earlier, it's great to journal, to contemplate our life's direction and set intentions for the coming year. Winter is an excellent time for planning. And visualizing future goals. Yeah. I love that. Cause I love to plan and I love to have goals. Are you like me or you don't like to plan. Number four nourish relationships.

Remember the TCM kidneys are connected to the reproductive system. So this is where we are going to connect and have relationship. So, while winter it's still a time for turning inward.

It's also important to nurture close relationships, specifically family relationship. So spending quality time with family, with kids, with close friends in a cosy, intimate setting. This is not a time to go in big crowds and enjoy a lot of people. It's just a cosy setting of a few people.

This is very TCM. Number five. Slowing down. Oh boy, that's hard for a lot of my patients. The go type has a lot of difficulties slowing down. Right. This is the person that usually says to me, oh, I can't do yoga because it's too slow. If you don't like yoga, you can't do it because it's too slow.

You're probably the person that needed the most right. To make sense. So number five is slowing down, Which means resisting the urge to maintain the same. Hectic pace as other seasons. So we want to allow ourself to slow down both physically and mentally. And number six is staying warm.

That's the whole base of yang theory. TCM and the kidneys keep the kidneys warm specifically. Protecting ourselves against the cold on the low back the belly and the NAPE or the back of the neck. This is why I love to wear scarves in winter. Those are my favorite. I have so many scarves, I feel cozy in the scarf

and it's just really good to protect from external invasion of pathogen wind, because it'll go right there on the NAPE, the upper back. Right. So now the lower back. Back is really what the kidney is reflecting too. So having a low back warm is really important. We don't want to not cover the low back in winter.

When I see teenage girls that walk around in winter with a little top that shows their belly and low back, I'm thinking, oh, that is so bad for you.

, observation of other people. When, you know, TCM. It just triggers different reaction. We want to embrace those six principles. And we want to teach them to our patients because this align ourselves with the yin nature of winter. Not only this, not only supports our kidney system, but it also prepare us for the renewal and growth of spring.

We want to be rested ready for spring to emerge. Does that make sense? So remember in TCM health is all about living in home and you have nature's cycle. Winter teaches us the value of rest. Reflection and the quiet strength that comes from nurturing. Deepest reserves. In TCM, the uniqueness of each individual is key to healing, right?

So treatment is always tailored to one specific person, their environment. The stage in life. But when it comes to TCM nutrition, there are four principles that actually apply to everyone no matter who they are specifically when supporting the kidney system. We want to always eat foods that are in season, which align our diet with the natural rhythm of the environment.

Like I said earlier, Eating local food, which are fresher and more harmonious with our surrounding. We don't want to buy food that comes from Asia, when you live in north America. Just consume the food that you need. I still don't understand why in Canada, for example, in winter, we have access to watermelon.

Watermelon is a summer fruit. Why do we need to eat watermelon in winter? That is not going to be seasonal, right? And it's not local food. It comes from far away. Usually. The next one that applies to everyone is practicing, mindful, eating. Including chewing our food thoroughly and avoiding distraction.

Everyone's on the devices. No, one's paying attention. There's just shoving the food in her mouth and they eat way more and it'll really enjoy it and savor it right. And the last one that applies to everyone is considering our genetic background in our diet choices. And that applies to people specifically, we're living in an area where they were not born and in Canada, there's a lot of people that come from somewhere else.

I came from France, moved to Canada, so I'm not from here. Right. And if I look at my ancestries, a lot of them were from the Mediterranean area. So I do very well with a Mediterranean kind of based diet. I don't do well with a diet that is geared to, for example I don't do well with a lot of really spicy food.

Although I like spicy food, it doesn't always agree with my body and I do much better with goat dairy or go cheese goat based dairy than cow, which is more common in the Mediterranean, the gold one that the cow right. Makes sense. So it's looking at that perspective. Now, let me tell you about my relationship to kidney essence. , if you're new here, you probably don't know this story, but if you've been around my TCM rockstar community at acupro academy for a long time, you probably have heard me say that I was born 10 weeks early.

I was a big premature baby. 10 weeks early. So I was not finished. My lungs weren't really fully developed. So I had asthma as a child. And when I came out, I had to be put in a incubator because of course I couldn't breathe. I had scoliosis, which means my spine wasn't straight. So that already tells you kidney essence is not that strong.

Right? First I didn't go to term or my mom didn't go to term with pregnancy. Second I had spine issue and the kidney and the spinal related and asthma as a child because the kidney and the lung have a connection in the breathing ability that we have right on top of it, the hair on my head didn't grow until .I was two.

years old. So the hair on our head connects to the kidneys and TCM as well. Right now I have a lot of hair, so I caught up.

My teeth are all crooked. They're not straight. So that's another connection to kidney essence. And my left ear is all weird, big looking if you've ever seen or paid attention, maybe now you're going to pay attention, but. My ear on the left side is quite bigger and it pulls out when I was a baby. My mom used to put hats on my head too. Make sure that the ear would stay against my head.

And she actually taped my ear to my head to make sure it wasn't growing wider.

That didn't work at all. I still have it ear. That just pops out. This is definitely kidney essence, not being very strong. My husband on the other hand is pretty much the same. He lost his hair on this head when he was 24 years old. So that's very early for men, right.

And his memory has never been very good. So again, that is a kidney deficiency. So between the two of us. We really need to take care of our TCM kidneys. And we do this to diets, to exercise through meditation, anything we can do to support our TCM kidney.

Now that was for me and my husband, but I have a lot of female patients who are always cold. Right. They are lower back is cold when you touch it, they are very, low, low energy. Most of the time, the fatigue, they want to sleep a lot. And they have low libido that is often a kidney yang deficiency and in winter, because it gets colder, depending on where we are, but most places it gets colder. Then we really, truly, for those patients need to support their kidney yang, even more than normal. So I always start to explain to patients that they need to have warmer food and no diet. Specifically if the yang deficiency, right?

Slow, cooked bone broth, Hardy stews with plenty of roots vegetables. So that helps. And then we also want to make sure that we stay hydrated with warm herbal teas, like ginger tea or turmeric tea. I love golden milk. If you drink all the milk, this is an ayurvedic recipe that is really warm. It has ginger turmeric, black pepper cinnamon. And usually it is cooked in coconut milk, but you can use any kind of milk that you like. And this is so soothing for the immune system and to support kidney yang.

So I love golden milk.

Before we started looking at the best food for the TCM kidneys pattern. I just wanted to let you know that in the show notes linked below, you can grab my free TCM nutrition PDF.

I created it just for you. It has comprehensive food recommendations for all the five yin organ patterns, not just the kidney, but the spleen, the liver, the heart and the lung. So make sure you get to the link below and grab your copy. It's completely free now. One of the things I wanted to say about the best food for the TCM kidneys. Is that we start with the basics and the five element theory, the kidneys or the water element relates to the black color.

So when it comes to the TCM kidneys, anything that is black it's going to be really nutritious to the TCM kidneys. Blackberries black Sesame seeds, black chia seed, black beans seaweeds. Now I know seaweed is dark green, but it comes from the sea, which relates to the water element.

And it's very dark. Those foods are your basics when it comes to supporting the kidneys.

Now let's look at those TCM kidney patterns. And let's start with the basic of kidney qi deficiency. The symptoms usually lower back ache, knee pain. Premature aging, probably incontinence specifically when the person cough or sneeze. Early balding.

So losing the hair on the head early age, seminal emission fatigue, maybe some spermatorrhea for men or having leakage when it comes to sperm or semen. Emotionally, it's going to be insecure or excessive fear. It could be rational fear or irrational. For kidney qi efficiency, people. We want to definitely nourish the qi and the kidney.

So food that is really good for those people are going to be salmon. Blackberry raspberries, parsley, rice, oysters. And we want to avoid any kind of excess, no alcohol, no stress, excess exercise or excess work or excess sexual activities. We want to conserve that kidney energy. The next pattern is kidney yin deficiency. Now, when it comes to kidney yin deficiency, the main symptoms are going to be dizziness, ear ringing or tinnitus that is really low pitch.

And that's been there for a long time. Dry mouth at night. Insomnia. This is the insomnia where you toss and turn all night. Lower back ache. Weaker legs, meaning that your legs feel like they don't have energy in them. I just like tired. Red cheeks, maybe some night sweat. A red tongue with no coat. The emotional aspect of this will be probably irritable easily, specifically some anxiety. And no commitment.

Remember the kidney is related to motivation and connection to family. So one, we're not committed to anything. That's a kidney yin deficiency. So not very dependable and not committed. The best food for kidney yin deficiency would have to be a bit more cooling. Right? So soy is more cooling. We have melons. Blue berries. Chestnut. Seaweed. So those are a little bit less. warm right. Makes sense. And then we can add black kidney beans,

barley. Potato. Black Sesame seeds. Eggs and cheese in small amounts, because when there is kidney yin deficiency, there's a bit of dryness and cheese brings a bit more dampness.

But if the person also has a lot of dampness and I would avoid the cheese. And then for recommendation, usually of course, like anything else, we try to avoid alcohol. Coffee. Hot meat. Like lamb is very hot. So we don't want to give that to someone that's kidney inefficiency because they have a little bit of heat coming from the deficiency.

Right. We don't want to drink golden milk for those people because cinnamon, ginger tumeric is quite warm and spicy food is going to increase the heat in that patient. So we probably want to avoid that as well.

Diagnosis has to be the hardest part of Chinese medicine. We always say there is no wrong treatment in TCM, only the wrong diagnosis. This is why I created my second book, Chinese Medicine Made Easy, to make it easy to grasp using a lot of colorful visuals. I have included all Chinese medicine foundation, Yin Yang Theory, Five Elements, Zong Fu Organ, all of it.

All diagnosis, of course, including tongue and pulse. Practice case studies to help you improve your skills, as well as give you access to my online fillable intake form to use with your own patients. You can download the digital version on any device, and it comes with many video links to complement it.

Or, if like me, you like to read a real book, the hard copy ships on. all over the world. Before you invest in this book, you can download a sample of it to make sure that the format of the book is everything you were looking for because I want to make sure that you are absolutely benefiting from it.

Listen to what people have to say about my green book, Chinese Medicine Made Easy. The more I read, the more I like this book. It is simple to follow, All information is super organized with great pictures, makes memorizing a lot easier. This book will definitely make my learning a lot more productive.

Yeah, so happy to hear that. You've done it again. You are amazing. I wish we had your resources 20 years ago back in TCM school. This also makes my day because this is why I do what I've been doing with Acupro Academy for quite a few years now. To support everyone, check out the links in the show notes below, or go to my website, acuproacademy.com

and click the shop tab on the menu bar and get your copy today.

The next one is the kidney yang deficiency. Which usually the person has a cold body feels cold inside, very pale face, maybe a bit swollen, puffy face, weak cold knees. Cold lower back that is achy. No libido. Clear profuse, watery, vaginal discharge. Fertility issue. And edema of the lower leg or ankle area. When it comes to the mental aspect, it's usually no willpower, no desire to do anything. Very inactive. Right because there's no fire when there's kidney yang deficiency, there's no fire.

So no heat, no activity. You feel like you just want to sleep all the time. So the person is not productive at all. The best food for kidney yang deficiency are going to be nuts, specifically. Walnuts. Almonds. Those are going to be the best. And then we want to give it a bit of tumeric and cinnamon and ginger.

Now you can have the golden milk because kidney yang deficiency is cold and we want to warm the person. They can eat lamb and any kind of meat. Salmon is also warm trout. Fatty fish are usually. Warmer. Onions garlic. That is also very warm. So we can add that up as well. And we want to try to avoid raw cold fruits specifically from the fridge or excess salt, because that's not going to help as well, because there are circulatory issue.

This is why the edema, because there's not enough fire to move the fluids. And the last one, which is not easy to address because it's an essence deficiency, right? Kidney essence deficiency has a lot of problem with probably lots of bad long-term memory. This happens to a lot of older people, but not necessarily. Loose teeth. Weak bones or brittle bones, hair loss that is happening very quickly.

There's a lot of different things that can come from hair loss. When it comes to hair loss. It could be a blood deficiency or it could be a kidney deficiency. If it is a kidney deficiency, is that kind of hair loss that happens in. Early age.

So it's not related to hormonal, like post-pregnancy, that's a blood deficiency usually, and then we can have painful knees. Painful lower back or low back issue as well, or spine issue as well. The person usually cannot focus, cannot concentrate has really bad memory and has insecurity as well. So food recommended for kidney essence deficiency is going to be a lot more animal products.

And so that's a choice for each patient. I don't eat meat. I don't like meat. I've never. Ever liked meat since I was a child. My mom used to be really frustrated with me because I just was the kid that would chew the same piece of chicken for 20 minutes and barely be able to swallow it without gagging.

So she finally gave up, I love fish, but I never liked meat itself. So I'm just saying that, we have to respect patients' desire of what they want to do, but we have options, right. Because obviously it's very hard to tonify kidney essence in just a plant world. Unfortunately. So when it comes to kidney essence, one of the things that comes from the sea is spirulina

so spirulina is great. It's high in vitamin B12. So that's something we can use. But in general, when it comes to kidney essence deficiency, we're going to look mostly at organs like liver. Brain. Bone marrow. Placenta. Yes. You heard me, right. So again, this is very TCM related it doesn't mean you have to eat all this, but if you are going to do let's say bone broth, for example, that is really nourishing to the kidney essence.

I give bone broth to my dog even. Because it's really good for him and his health in these had a lot of issue with his teeth when he was a baby. So now he gets bone broth. Yes. I know he's treated like a princess. We call him princess because he literally is. Boomer is a princess, even though he's a boy, he's a princess of the house. So we can look, like I said, at organ meat, like liver, kidney. Brain, bones, bone marrow placenta, if not, when it comes to plant. Almonds walnuts. Royal jelly and bee pollen.

I don't eat meat, but I grew up on bee pollen and Royal jelly. So that to me works really well. But again, we have to respect people, right. And when it comes to kidney essence deficiency. We want to avoid excess in any kind in our lifestyle. Not overexercising not over sexual activities, no marijuana, no drugs, no cigarette.

Like we have to really try to protect that Jing, that essence.

When designing a meal plan for patients with TCM kidney pattern, it is essential to focus on food that are going to nourish the kidneys. Right. Basic food. For example, for breakfast would be great to have warm oatmeal or warm quinoa with black Sesame seeds and goji berries. For example. Now go, goji berries is also part of the night shade family. Like eggplant, tomatoes, potatoes, and people that have arthritis.

For example. Usually don't do well on nightshade vegetable. So we have to remember that goji berries. It's also part of the nightshade. So if you have an elderly person that is going to have a lot of arthritis, goji berries may not be the best for them. For snacks weekend, recommend handfuls of walnuts.

Almonds. That's pretty easy. Or we can have one of my favorite. Steamed pears.

drizzled with cinnamon. And a little bit of dark chocolate. Oh, it's so good. For meals, you can recommend bone broth soup with lots of vegetables and add up kidney beans in there

and roots, vegetables and seaweed. If we don't want to add up meat for example, right. Or we can add up all the meats that you feel is very useful for your patient.

We can have steamed fish with ginger and green onions. You can serve that on a bed of quinoa with some steam asparagus. So good. And we want to encourage our patient to stay well hydrated in winter with warm herbal teas. That also is really key to keeping the kidney strong. Because in winter, most people have tendency to drink less just because they're not hot.

Right. Makes sense. I hope that was useful. It is always a pleasure weekly to guide you through the TCM wisdom that we all want to use to improve the health of our patients. Remember your TCM journey, whether you're a practitioner or a student, doesn't have to be walked alone. Continue to listen to the podcast, check out my YouTube channel or my website acuproacademy.com because I have tons of resources for you. Online courses, books, PDF treatment protocol, and so much more. And don't forget to grab your TCM nutrition PDF, which is yours for free. The link is in the show note below. And if you found value in today's episode, please subscribe, follow the acupro show on your favorite podcast platform. And you can also text this episode to a friend, you know, could benefit from the timeless wisdom of TCM. Your support means the world to me and you and I help spread the knowledge that can transform. Lives one patient at a time.

So keep nourishing your body, mind and spirit. Thank you so much for listening and until next time, keep rocking it. Using TCM.

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