

Surfacing Wellness & Health

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Autumn

I reluctantly face the reality of Summer passing into Autumn into Winter. The Midwest autumn contains a hint of summer warmth, but the truth is our personal and collective rhythm should shift with the rhythm of the Earth.

In the Five Element theory of Oriental Medicine, Autumn is Metal. We've left the Fire element behind us with Summer, and the Water of Winter isn't far off.

The expansive outward yang energy of Summer is waning. Metal is contraction, condensation and crystallization - the time of more yin, inward and downward movement. The Metal element is connected to the skin and pores, the Lung and Large Intestine. Therefore an imbalance in Metal can result in respiratory or skin problems, constipation or immune dysfunction. Autumn, Metal, and related organs release and let go. This is the time to reflect and to let go of which no longer serve us.

This summer, the abundant rain swelled the wooden door in my backyard. It would stick, a hard yank and slam would announce each tenant's coming and going. That dampness of summer rain swelled and stagnated the door just as the excesses of our sociable summer can accumulate in our bodies causing sluggishness, foggy-headedness, and maybe digestive or sinus issues.

I needed to exert more energy to open my backyard door just as it would take more energy to work with my sluggish body. Eventually the sun dried the dampness from the door, but sometimes a person needs more than warmth from the summer sun to clear the dampness from the body.

The sweetness of summer fruit, juices,

pastries and ice creams can add to the dampness that causes sluggishness and heaviness. Balancing all the seasonal flavors of sour, bitter, spicy, bland, salty and sweet will reduce potential for imbalance. Introducing bitter and spicy flavors will cleanse the body of the damp excess.

Lungs are most susceptible to imbalance and the most easily strengthened during the Autumn. Respiratory imbalances will be fraught with mucous and tight heavy-headedness. Infections will cling to the

Look for arugula, radish, kale, mustard and turnip greens, horseradish, chives, and brassicas - cabbages, brussel sprouts, broccoli rabe, radicchio, and endive.

Make herbal teas with fresh nutmeg, allspice, ginger, and cinnamon.

dampness throughout the winter without intervention.

To flow with the seasonal rhythm and to strengthen the Metal element, experiment with pungent greens and warming spicy teas to activate qi (energy) to push outward and upward raising warming yang energy and maintaining yin. You will clear away dampness and strengthen the immune and respiratory systems for the next season. Practice yoga, qi gong, or receive tonifying and cleansing acupuncture for the Lung and Large Intestine.

Watch the leaves change and fall and feel the North winds blow, follow the same rhythm turning inward and reflecting and you will be living more balanced and harmonious.



Updates

Home Visits &

Downtown Chicago

Beginning November, I will be available for in-home treatments on Fridays. You can also find me at Allyu, a green spa in River North, offering acupuncture, facial rejuvenation acupuncture, and talks part-time.

Baking Demonstration

I am looking for video-friendly kitchens for gluten-free baking demonstrations. If you and/or your kitchen want to be on film, contact me. You will get some tasty treats and some useful information before it is finished.

Ideal kitchens would contain an island and room for 2 or 3 crew members with compact video equipment.

Evanston or Your home
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Treatment Protocol

Don't get sick

This might come too late for some people and I am sorry if you are already sniffing, sneezing, blowing or coughing. Even though that is a logical condition to experience with the season change, it doesn't have to happen, really!

In Chinese Medicine a cold is an exterior condition since it is an acute pathogen entering the body from the external environment.

The first step is **prevention**. Keep your exterior (immunity, skin, pores and joints) strong. I have successfully kept seasonal and winter colds away for several years. I've gotten the scratchy throat or minor sinus drainage but halted it from sinking deeper into my lungs avoiding cough, fatigue and time off from work.

An herbal formula like Jade Wind-screen taken for several weeks prior to seasonal changes will strengthen immunity and balance Lung and Liver reducing seasonal allergies. **Foods high in vitamin A, C and zinc and basic herbs such as rosehips, echinacea, parsley, nettles, ginseng, and barley grass will bolster the immune system. Energy boosters like Emergen-C help in a pinch.**

The second step is **know your very first symptom** of a cold, don't deny it's a cold and treat it before it gets lodged into your body. The Chinese Medicine theory regarding colds is that Wind, the pathogen that causes the cold,

enters at the nape of the neck.

General early signs of a cold: mild tiredness, headache, joint or neck aches, chills, aversion to wind or cold, throat pressure or scratching, sinus sniffles, sneezing or clear drainage. Fever, sore throat, fatigue or sinus pressure are usually signs the cold is present and not an early sign. Each person is different and you may have an early symptom that is not listed.

This second step reverses the pathogen's progress. A practitioner provides a tea with the action to vent energy up and out through the skin, or gua sha the neck and upper back, or needles points which will vent out the pathogen and strengthen the immune system. Gua sha, application of tool on the skin surface, causes the body to push out the Wind pathogen. Applying pressure and friction to the upper back and nape of the neck moves energy and blood mimicking the effects of sweating. The pores are stabilized reversing the pathogen's progress.

If you want to treat yourself, you should sweat it out literally. Staying with the theory that the cold came in through your pores, push it out with sweat. Sweating will open your pores to release the pathogen. You don't want to sweat to exhaustion; and if you have already been sweating since the start, you actually want to stop the sweating so don't use the following instructions.

Drink a cup or two of hot tea of

fresh herbs simmered and steeped in water - ginger or peppermint or cayenne or the sure fire scallion tea (3 - 5 stalks); or drink First Defense (my tactic for the last 8 years) a granule tea from [Life Rising Herbs](#). Then take a steamy hot bath, stay warm keeping your pores open but protected by covering up and drink more tea while remaining warm and covered. Sweat away.

If you've been sweating from the start, this means your energy is a little on the weak side and you need to rest and to take herbs that will close the pores and increase your energy. Try drinking cinnamon twig and fresh ginger tea or a vegetable leek soup - foods that are nurturing, warm and slightly sweet natured.

The third step, if you didn't catch your first sign of imbalance (most people get stuck at denying it's a cold), is **prevent it from reaching your lungs**. To prevent that cough and mucus, you may need to let it run its course or get in to your local herbalist. Basic herbal formulas are as numerous as drug-store remedies. Over-the-counter cough suppressants do just that they suppress the cough pushing it deeper. It could just allow the pathogen to lie dormant until later in the season or push it down into the digestive system causing other symptoms. A cough causing discomfort, lack of sleep, or fatigue can benefit from a cough formula or syrup from Chinatown or an herbalist/acupuncturist or from some acupuncture and other herbal teas.