

HOW TO NOT GET THE FLU

...THE CHINESE MEDICINE WAY

AH! AH!...AH! CHOO! Oh, the all too common exclamation resulting from our winter virus foe. Some people catch the Flu or the Common Cold and some do not. The truth is that these viruses are around us all the time, but not all of us get sick...Why?

Lets go back oh...3000 years or so to China. At this time there are no microscopes or labs that can isolate and identify little bacteria or viruses in the body. Because the culture lives so closely with the elements, they look at things through the scope of nature and learn about the ebb and flow of life through the seasons.

Words like Cold, Heat, Wind, Fire, Dryness and Dampness are used to name diseases. Let's say someone notices that they actually feel cold or have a dry, sore throat, headache, body ache, tiredness, sneezing, cough, chills or a high fever. A Chinese doctor would call that a Wind-Cold Invasion. Since temperature is carried by the wind, the doctor believes that the Wind has carried the Cold into us. There is something else that is uniquely different about this society - here the doctor is seen year round in order to prevent disease. It is the doctor's job to keep her or his patients feeling well and if they do get sick, to treat them. In fact when patients in China got sick, it was the only time that they did not have to pay the doctor! This type of relationship is a proactive approach to wellness – very different from the one we have in the future, don't you think?

One might ask how exactly did the Chinese doctors keep their patients well? By strengthening the protective layer of energy. Today we call it the immune system, in Chinese Medicine it's called Wei Chi (Way Chee). Wei means 'defensive' and Chi means the 'vital energetic force that animates us'. Imagine the Wei Chi like a protective layer of insulation around our bodies.

If a person is healthy and strong both mentally and physically their Wei Chi is fat and solid. When the Wind blows some Cold in their direction, it bounces right off. If they are unwell and/or weak, their Wei Chi looks more like a thin slice of Swiss cheese. When the Wind-Cold hits them, it will invade through those holes, usually in the posterior neck area, and they will immediately start feeling tired, achy and have a sore throat.

By using Acupuncture and Chinese medicine Wei Chi can be strengthened and any Wind-Cold invasion can be cleared from the system. This especially works well if it can be identified early, so going see your Acupuncturist at the first cold symptoms is highly recommended.



7 Ways to Keeping Wei Chi Strong and Prevent the Flu:

- **Regular Gentle Exercise:** Move your body to the point of warming you up but not sweating profusely. If you are exercising outside make sure to dress appropriately and cover your neck with a scarf, as Wind usually enters through the back of the neck.
- **Reduce your Stress Level:** Practices like Yoga and Tai Chi or breathing exercises can help you reduce both emotional and physical stress. Be aware of stressful moments in your day and try to use your breath in the moments you need them most!
- **Eat Well:** Eat a full, balanced diet that is abundant in vitamins, minerals, colors and tastes. Eat simple, non-processed foods. Foods that are local, in-season and fresh have the most vibrant chi and can help strengthen rather than weaken. In winter, eat carrots, broccoli, sweet potatoes, garlic, beets and other root veggies.
- **Drink Lots of Temperate Clean Water/Tea:** Staying hydrated is key to keeping a strong Wei Chi. I recommend drinking half your body-weight in ounces of room temperature or warm well-filtered water daily. So if you weight 200 lbs, drink 100 oz of water per day. Avoid drinking very cold water as this hinders digestion and weakens your Chi. Sugary or caffeinated drinks deplete your immune system as well.
- **Get enough Rest:** Though it goes against our cultural norm, rest is actually good for you. In the winter, in particular, go to bed earlier and sleep in later if you are able to. Along with strengthening your Wei Chi, good rest also rejuvenates and strengthens you. You will feel more vibrant and your mind will work more efficiently.
- **Add some spice:** Herbs like Ginger and Cinnamon will warm you from the inside. Make teas out of freshly cut or dried ginger and/or cinnamon bark. You can also add more of these spices to your foods.