

## HEALTH

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## TCM: Sea of marrow

According to TCM, the brain consists of "marrow" which is located in the cranial cavity. The brain is also known as the "sea of marrow". "Marrow" is a substance mainly derived from kidney essence for nourishing the brain, spinal cord and bones. Practitioners realised 2,000 years ago that the brain was related to mental activities as well as the senses. A TCM classic states: "If the sea of marrow is insufficient, there may be dizziness, ringing ears, neck aches, vision blackouts and lethargy."

Sensory organs such as the ears, eyes, nose and tongue are orifices of the brain. The brain and its orifices depend on the internal organs to supply essential substances for normal functioning. The orifices can also be regarded as the openings of the internal organs on the body surface: the liver opens into the eyes, the heart opens into the tongue, the spleen opens into the mouth, the lung opens into the nose, and the kidney opens into the ears. Any pathologic change of these orifices contributes to a diagnosis of disorders of the organ systems, and TCM physicians target corresponding organs to enhance the function of the orifices.

For middle-aged and elderly people, taking care of the kidney system is important. A strong kidney system ensures that the "sea of marrow" is well nourished, and one will be full of energy, have a quick mind and good hearing. Gradual deafness coincides with age-

related depletion of kidney essence. Such individuals are also likely to develop ringing in the ears characterised by a persistent low whistling sound. Other accompanying signs include dizziness, lumbar soreness, knee weakness and blurred vision.

Rehmannia Bolus is a famous and useful tonic for this condition. Used for reinforcing the kidneys and replenishing essence, it consists of processed

rehmannia rhizome, cornus fruit and Chinese yams. Two other ingredients, magnetite and acorus, are often prescribed for improving ear function.

Always avoid allowing the ears be exposed to noise for long periods, as chronic exposure to loud noise is an important factor contributing to hearing loss. People need to take care when cleaning their ears, since damage to the delicate lining of the ear canal will make

the ear condition worse and increase the likelihood of infection. Among the elderly, ear itchiness is often due to inadequate secretions. TCM physicians aim to improve the circulation of the region so as to nourish the ear canals and stop itchiness. Some herbs are also available to eliminate ear infections:

TCM believes that foods beneficial to the kidney system help prevent deterioration of hearing. These include walnuts, animal kidneys, black sesame and black soybeans which are recommended for serving in porridge.

TCM also has a massage treatment that helps the ear region function. Use the index or middle fingers to rub forcefully in the front and back of the ears about 40 times. Secondly, softly pinch along the edges of the auricles - ear flaps - with the thumbs and index fingers about 30 times to warm them. Thirdly, cover the ears with the palms, then flick the index finger against the middle finger so that it hits just behind the ear to create a booming sound. Do this 20 times. Lastly, press in front of the ears with the thumbs or index fingers. Rub forcefully 30 times until a feeling of warmth results. This can enhance hearing, and relieve other ear problems.

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