

## HEALTH

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## TCM

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## Pregnant pause

When a woman conceives, her body undergoes changes that enable the baby to grow. Morning sickness (although it can occur at any time), fatigue and other symptoms are more prominent in the early months, making pregnant women uncomfortable.

From a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) perspective, these conditions occur because of dramatic changes in the meridians of the thoroughfare

vessel and conception vessel as they become highly active in providing blood and *chi* to the uterus. Along with a woman's inherited factors, these changes can affect how organs function.

When the thoroughfare vessel becomes hyperactive during pregnancy, it interferes with normal functions of the spleen and stomach. In turn, it's difficult for food to be digested and passed through the stomach and intestines.

Women may then experience nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, fatigue, weakness and passing shapeless, unformed stools. Symptoms are most noticeable in the morning and more likely appear in those who have a weak spleen. A TCM treatment is to fortify

the spleen's functions, and harmonise the stomach. Ingredients include ginseng, large-head atractylodes rhizome, Indian bread, Chinese yam, liquorice root and red dates, while tangerine peel, pinella tuber, cardamom seed and finger citron are used for fortifying the stomach.

Individuals who tend to have a hyperactive liver may look thin and experience emotional instability. Pregnancy in these women will cause the liver to restrict the stomach.

Signs of a hyperactive liver in early pregnancy may include a bitter taste in the mouth, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, discomfort in the breasts and the sides of the ribs, irritability and a tendency to prefer acidic

foods. TCM herbs that can be used to soothe the liver include bupleurum, nutgrass and turmeric root-tuber.

If a woman is starting out her pregnancy overweight or has accumulated pathogens, she's more likely to develop severe nausea, excessive saliva or mucus, bloating in the chest and gastric regions, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, heavy limbs and puffiness below the knees.

According to TCM, this is due to a sluggish flow of *chi* that causes body fluid disturbances leading to accumulation of phlegm. TCM focuses on restoring fluid balance to help expel the pathogens. Commonly used herbs include atractylodes root, spine date and ginger.

Appropriate diet always plays a crucial role. Eating several small meals a day so the stomach is never empty and eating sour and spicy foods promote appetite. Ginger is effective in combating morning sickness and promoting appetite. Fresh ginger served warm usually gets the best results.

Ways to consume it include mixing ginger juice with sugar cane juice or honey; drinking ginger and tangerine peel tea; or drop the juice on the tongue. No more than 10 grams of ginger per day should be consumed because its warming properties when taken in excess don't help a growing fetus.

*Before taking medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner*