

HEALTH

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TCM

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Surgical strike

Undergoing major surgery carries the risk of complications. Preparations before and after the operation are the best way to help the process go smoothly.

From a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) perspective, surgery often exhausts a person's blood and *chi* (vital energy) causing internal disharmonies.

Besides acupuncture, some

TCM methods can help build the body's constitution and relieve discomfort associated with surgical procedures.

Generally, TCM's so-called tonifying methods have to start one to two weeks before scheduled surgery. A tonic preparation aims to improve general physical strength, as well of as the area where the surgery is to occur. Patients are usually prescribed tonics well known for replenishing blood and *chi*, as well as for nourishing the liver and kidneys.

These include the Four-gentlemen Decoction, Four-substance Decoction, Eight-treasure Decoction, All-inclusive

Great Tonifying Decoction, Six-Ingredient with Rehmannia and Restore the Spleen Decoction.

Due to anaesthesia, bleeding and surgical trauma, a patient's spleen and stomach (which generally refers to the digestive system in western terms) is

affected. It's common to have a poor appetite, abdominal distention, constipation, nausea and vomiting.

If the symptoms are mild, then a prescription called Costus and Amomum with Six Noble Ingredients Decoction can be used. If someone has more obvious abdominal distention, constipation, mouth dryness and a yellow thick tongue coating, it means there's *chi* stagnation and heat accumulation in the organs.

TCM practitioners may then prescribe bitter orange peel, magnolia bark, Chinese rhubarb (left) or costus root. Where weakness is significant, tonifying herbs are added to the

prescription such as ginseng, astragalus, liquorice root, chicken gizzard-skin and tangerine peel.

In post-operative patients, a mild degree of movement can easily induce sweating. TCM refers to this as a morbid condition due to an exterior deficiency or heart deficiency, which makes people more susceptible to infections and sleeping problems.

A prescription for this is Jade Windscreen Powder. Some other common herbal ingredients are astragalus, largehead atractylodes root, ledebouriella root, shrivelled wheat, schisandra and radix pseudostellariae.

Symptoms such as severe

mouth dryness, a dark red tongue without any coating, dry stools, lack of appetite, nausea or vomiting are usually due to body fluid exhaustion and damaged stomach *yin*.

Higher doses of appropriate herbs are generally prescribed for these conditions, such as fourleaf ladybell root, and snakegourd root, solomonseal rhizome and rehmannia rhizome.

Having an experienced TCM practitioner provide prescriptions for before and after surgery is recommended.

Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner