

HEALTH

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TCM

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Cool lotus

The lotus is a perennial aquatic plant related to the water lily that grows in tropical Asia. Its leaves are used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat bleeding and clear summer heat and dampness.

Lotus leaves can be used as a medicinal herb or in food, with steamed rice and chicken wrapped in lotus leaf being a well known Chinese dish.

According to one Qin dynasty (221BC-206BC) legend, villagers fed this dish to an army

garrisoned nearby, who were suffering desperately from food and water shortages in the hottest part of the summer.

The food helped clear heat and dampness from the soldier's bodies and strengthened their stomachs and spleens, eventually allowing them to defeat the enemy.

The main medicinal functions of lotus leaf are to stop bleeding and invigorate the blood. It's used to treat a variety of conditions ranging from hematemesis (vomit in the blood) to hematuria (blood in the urine), metrorrhagia (uterine bleeding at irregular intervals) and diarrhoea.

The usual dose of lotus leaf is about 6-12g boiled in water as a decoction. Dried and sliced

lotus leaves can be found in many herbal shops in Hong Kong and is also available in capsule or powder forms.

Larger doses can also be taken, depending on the condition, and are considered safe when used appropriately. Lotus leaf and winter melon

soup is a popular dish for heatstroke prevention. In TCM, heatstroke is said to be caused by the accumulation of heat evils in the body, which eventually disable the body's mechanisms for dealing with heat stress, such as sweating and temperature control.

Two large pieces of lotus leaves are cut into small pieces after washing thoroughly and mixed with 1kg of winter melon (with peel). This is boiled in about two litres of water for two hours. As well, 12g of red beans and 12g of flat bean (dolichos nut) can be added, with brown sugar or salt for seasoning.

Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner