

HEALTH

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TCM

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Cancer care

In 12th-century China, tumours were described as masses that were "rock-firm with uneven surfaces". Over the centuries, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has developed knowledge about treating cancer, and most anti-cancer ingredients used are derived from ancient remedies.

Although traditional therapies have been replaced by modern treatments, TCM's complementary role in health enhancement and protection remains useful in cancer-treatment regimens.

From a TCM perspective, cancer isn't simply a localised disease but a series of complex, systemic disorders. Its development is said to be due to a weakened body, which is then susceptible to different carcinogens.

When harmful factors act repeatedly on the body, it leads to internal disharmony and organ dysfunction, which causes an accumulation of pathological

waste products, TCM says. In turn, these waste products induce abnormal growth. Treatments such as surgery, radiation or chemotherapy are designed to kill cancer cells, but they also affect normal cells.

From a TCM perspective, they act powerfully to eliminate "evils", but they also damage the body's healthy energy, resulting in a habitat that still facilitates cancer growth.

TCM physicians say they're able to recognise substantial bodily changes in cancer patients through holistic examination and diagnostic skills. Generally, TCM complementary methods aim to control symptoms, shorten recovery time and improve quality of life and may affect

survival rates. Ways to help cancer patients include clearing heat and toxins to prevent inflammatory reactions, nourishing yin to promote body-fluid production and relieve dryness symptoms; replenishing *chi* and cooling the blood to relieve fever, fatigue, heart palpitations and dizziness; fortifying the liver and kidneys to relieve general weakness, depression, low blood count, palpitations and shortness of breath; and invigorating the spleen and harmonising the stomach to relieve nausea, poor appetite and diarrhoea.

Honeysuckle flower, fructus forsythiae and dandelion (left) are used for clearing heat, while radix trichosanthis, rehmannia rhizome and radix ophiopogonis are good for nourishing yin.

Astragalus, rehmannia rhizome and caulis spatulobi replenish *chi* and cool the blood, and herbs such as fleece flower root, eucommia bark and dodder seed fortify the liver and kidneys.

Tangerine peel, pilose asiabell root and largehead atractylodes root invigorate the spleen and harmonise stomach function.

Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner