

HEALTH

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TCM

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Liverish stress

In traditional Chinese medicine, irritable bowel syndrome is regarded as being due mainly to emotional disturbances leading to organ disharmonies. The liver is the organ most affected by stress. Long-term emotional stimulation causes liver stagnation, which is said to interfere with the digestive functions of the spleen

and stomach. When it disturbs the intestines' process, abdominal pain, diarrhoea or constipation can occur. Diet, fatigue, damp and cold make the symptoms worse.

When an IBS patient has liver stagnation, this is typically triggered or aggravated by stress. There's distending pain below the ribs that can be reduced by belching or passing gas.

Diarrhoea may occur immediately after the pain, or the patient has difficulty with bowel movements for several days. If the condition persists, internal heat will accumulate and lead

to pellet-shaped stools. Other common symptoms include nausea and acid reflux. The classic formula for patients with this syndrome is Liu Mo Tang, which focuses on soothing the liver and smoothing the stagnated flow. Acupuncture is effective at restoring the smooth flow of liver chi. Tai chi or qigong also help.

In TCM, the spleen is considered to be the key organ regulating digestion. IBS patients with spleen deficiency will experience fatigue and diarrhoea.

This is often accompanied by abdominal pain, gas and bloating. The pain is dull and can be reduced by warmth, pressing on the area or eating appropriate foods. Haemorrhoids are an additional indication of spleen deficiency. Acupuncture is used to help nourish spleen chi. One classic herbal formula used for spleen deficiency is called Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang.

In Chinese medicine,

dairy foods and excessive sugar intake are said to create dampness. There can also be pain with an excess of cold. There may be early morning diarrhoea, limb coldness, a sore back and stools containing undigested food. Symptoms are usually made worse after consuming frozen foods. The classic formula Si Shen Wan may be prescribed for warming the spleen and kidney as well as resuming normal bowel movements.

Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner