

TCM: Clean spleen

During middle age, physical deterioration becomes obvious. We don't have as much get-up-and-go as before, our hair turns gray and we gain weight. These changes often make us realise that we can no longer ignore our bodies. Traditional Chinese medicine tries to delay physical aging from a functional aspect.

According to TCM, body weight is closely associated with the spleen's transportation and transformation functions. Normal spleen functioning ensures that blood and qi are abundant, and the body is muscular and healthy. If the spleen fails in its transportation function, it leads to phlegm and dampness accumulating internally. This may lead to obesity. However, if the transformation function isn't acting as it should, there's an inadequate source of nourishment and the body will be underweight.

Liver blood also promotes flexible joints, and kidney essence ensures a firm, straight body framework. As we grow older, decline in these organs causes changes in the appearance of our bodies and limits the physical activities. To maintain optimal physical condition, TCM stresses protecting the spleen and stomach to ensure bodily endurance, as well as nourishing the kidney and liver for sustainable flexibility and mobility.

On the other hand, blood and essence form the material basis for all kinds of functional activities. The liver stores blood and the kidneys store essence. They're responsible for aging signs such as blurred vision, diminished hearing, grey hair, joint stiffness, menstrual problems, clumsy movements, low hormone levels, fragile

bones, shrinkage of the sexual organs and decreased energy and vigor. Anti-aging remedies should always consider these two organs.

The following is a sample prescription to tonify the liver and the kidneys: Dodder seeds and cistanche (rou cong rong) (90g each), schisandra, Japanese teasel root (xu duan), Chinese senega (yuan zhi), cornus fruit (shan yu rou) and oriental water-plantain root (45g each), ledebouriella root (fang feng, 60g) and morinda root (30g). Grind into a powder, add honey and make into pills. Before breakfast, take 30g with a small cup of wine.

Some people develop dark age-spots, purplish lips, nail deformities, dull complexion and blood vessel dilatation, among other symptoms. TCM regards these signs of aging as a state of blood stasis and an accumulation of phlegm. Physicians will treat these problems by activating blood flow and dissolving the phlegm for a period of time.

Moxibustion and massage may also aid in the enhanced functioning of crucial organs as we age.

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Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner