



Ana-med
ACUPUNCTURE

Chinese Diet Therapy and Nutrition

More and more we are seeing the cross-over of Chinese diet therapy moving into western nutrition as herbal and dietary supplement companies borrow the odd herb and promote it for its adaptogenic properties or as a new 'super-food' (for example goji or ginseng). All foods have certain actions and properties just as herbs do according to Chinese medical theory – particular foods such as goji berries and dates may be better for building blood where chicken or bee pollen are better at supplementing qi for example.

Herbs are often added to the ingredients of soups and dishes to produce a balanced medicinal food. A classic and widely used medicinal dish in Asia is rice congee or 'jook'. This dish uses well cooked rice (4 hours of cooking at the very least) to make a soupy porridge of the rice and water or stock in which the addition of herbs or foods can supplement. This dish is easily digested and with the right ingredients can be very nutritious making it an ideal way of building up those who are recovering from illness or the elderly.

Diet therapy of the Chinese does not always correspond to modern day ideas of diet. For example, a 'liver detox' with focus on a raw food diet may be great for those with liver excess and fire but if a person has a weak digestive system (Spleen and Stomach function in Chinese Medicine) this would not be advised by a TCM practitioner as it is likely to further weaken the digestive 'fire' and dampen the digestion processes.

Chinese diet therapy and medicine in general is all about balance – specifically of the yin and yang of the body. Everything in moderation and nothing in excess are good general rules as well as giving the stomach a nutritional varied diet. Basic principles such as taking time to enjoy your food in a relaxing environment – this does not mean watching television or being on the computer while you are eating as these are very stimulating for the mind. If the mind is switched on then the body's focus or qi is taken away from the centre where the breaking down and digestion of the food takes place. There is also an old saying which promotes walking '100 steps' after eating to aid digestion.