



Springtime is when Yang energy rises. Winter sleep is abandoned and plants begin to awaken; new shoots appear, trees bud and blossom.

Springtime Watercress Soup

The liver is the organ that relates to spring and so we need to be concerned with improving our sluggish winter circulation and ridding the body of any toxins. Just like we clear a flower bed of any old leaves and dead plants before planting new seedlings, we should do the same with our bodies. When the liver Qi is stagnant, we will have more irritability, depression and frustration. Physically, the body may feel heavy and sluggish with joints aching and not moving smoothly.

It is also a time when the weather can suddenly become warm and compared to winter's cold, we find that we can wear less clothing. Sometimes, though, if the Yang energy in the body is not strong, wind – which dominates this season – can go inside the body causing symptoms of dizziness, headache, stiffness in the neck,

So we also need to protect the body from external forces like wind that can cause illness and disharmony in the body. We can avoid wind illnesses by protecting our bodies internally through more vigorous Qigong exercises which will warm the blood and balance the liver function. Externally, we should not go to bed with wet hair (true for all seasons) or go outside also while the hair is wet when it is windy and cold. In these cases, it is very easy for the wind to go inside the head causing headaches, dizziness, toothache and irritability. If not released, it can move to the chest and affect the lungs, causing coughing and allergies.

In terms of the five element flavours for food, sour relates to the liver and so we should refrain from eating too many sour foods in this season as this will overburden the liver. Foods that will improve blood circulation and can help

Watercress Soup

This soup is different from Western versions which might include cream or butter. This is a light soup which helps to cleanse and hydrate the body and balance the liver. The bitter almonds are good for the throat and coughing.

*One bunch fresh watercress,
washed and cleaned thoroughly*

*1 tsp small, bitter almonds found
in Chinese supermarkets. Do not
overuse as they are toxic in larger
amounts.*

*Pork loin or shank (can omit for
vegetarian version). Rinse in
boiling water and discard water.
Then rinse in cold water, drain
and set aside*

*6-8 dried figs, rinsed and cut in
half*

*2 honey dates (if you cannot find
in Chinese supermarket, omit this
item).*

*4-6 dried Shitake mushrooms.
Rinse well in cool water and then
soak in cold water for a few
hours. Remove hard stem and cut
into thirds.*

1 tsp salt

Heat 6-8 to Chinese rice bowls of water until just boiling. Add all the ingredients and bring to a boil and then turn down to simmer. Cook at a low heat for 2-3 hours (the vegetarian version will take less time).

Season to taste with white pepper or extra salt at the table. ■

by Jessica Tse



constipation and shaking. In more severe cases, it can even cause numbness in the limbs, paralysis, seizures and loss of consciousness.

to release stagnation are good. Watercress is very good for cleansing the blood and figs help to moisten the body and create lubrication, helping constipation.