

As we approach the darkest and coldest time of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, I am compelled to share with you my favorite strategy for avoiding colds and flus.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), colds and flus are considered to be the result of “external pathogenic influences” that work their way through the surface of the body to enter its deeper layers. Going to bed with wet hair, sleeping next to a cold draft, or leaving your neck unprotected from a cold wind are all examples of how “Cold,” as a pathogenic factor, can penetrate the surface of the body and begin the disease process.

This environmentally based theory of disease precedes the advent of microbiology and the ensuing discovery that colds and flus are both communicable and are associated with specific microorganisms. In TCM terms, during the onset of a cold or flu, the defensive “Qi” or “Wei Qi” of the body interacts with the pathogenic influence, usually associated with what is called Wind-Heat, or Wind-Cold. Strong “Wei Qi” protects the body, even in compromised conditions, while weak “Wei Qi” leaves the individual vulnerable to invasion.

In modern Biomedical terms this relates to how the immune system interacts with the infecting organism. According to *the germ theory*, microorganisms are the cause of infectious disease. However, in TCM theory the relationship between the constitution of the patient and the strength of the pathogenic influence determines whether or not the body will succumb to the environmental pressure, and allow the infectious disease process to unfold.

An overlay of these two theoretical systems reveals a more complete picture. When the body is weak, and the pathogenic influence is strong, an environmental change occurs, and allows an opportunistic infection to find a foothold. Once established, the over-proliferation of the infectious organism leads to the overt signs and symptoms we now know to be associated with infection.

Before a pathogen such as a bacteria or a virus has established itself within our body, there is often an opportunity to re-establish balance, and avoid a more prolonged disease process. By altering our internal environment and releasing the pathogenic influence before it has taken hold, we are able to make our bodies less inhabitable to opportunistic infections, and we can avoid *getting sick*.

Like most disease processes, the treatment of colds and flus is most effective during the earliest stages of its development.

Tips for avoiding colds and flus:

Learn to identify your earliest signs and symptoms i.e. sore or scratchy throat, slight cough, mild fever, chills, fatigue, light-headedness, sneezing, runny nose, stiff neck, achiness, or whatever these might be for you. For myself, one of the first signs that I may be “getting sick” is the following thought entering my mind, “am I getting sick?”

Take action at the first sign or symptom:

1. Eat a bowl of hot and sour soup with extra spice to “warm the interior” and encourage sweating.
2. Take diaphoretics – plants that help induce a sweat. Yin Qiao San tablets are a classic TCM remedy.
3. 20-30 minutes after taking diaphoretics, take a hot bath with Epsom salts or mustard bath to induce a strong sweat
4. Stay bundled when getting out of the bath. It’s important to stay hot, and keep a sweat going, even if it’s somewhat uncomfortable.
5. Go to bed early and get to sleep
6. Repeat as needed unless very fatigued
7. Take additional Yin Qiao San every 2-3 hours
8. Drink extra water
9. If symptoms get worse, contact a practitioner for help
10. Feel free to give us a call at Jade Mountain Medicine for assistance:
541 482 2107.