

Different Drummer Acupuncture

An Occasional Newsletter



Menopause

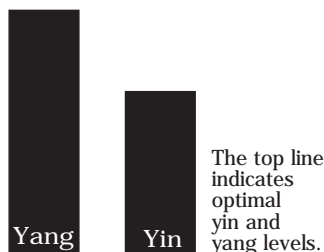
Winter is associated with the kidney in Chinese Five Element Theory. Common kidney disharmonies are perimenopause and menopause. Women who are years away from menopause note that your lifestyle and diet from childhood play a significant role in determining what kind of menopause you will have.

All women go through menopause. Some experience it naturally and others have it thrust upon them like Bandit when she was spayed. In either case Chinese medicine has shown to be successful at alleviating the symptoms. Chinese medicine has addressed women's specific health problems for 3,000 years. There were specialists in women's medicine as early as 2,500 years ago. Gynecological formulas that we use today date back over 2,000 years. Western doctors are now discovering the benefits of this ancient wisdom. Chistianie Northrup, MD mentions the benefits of acupuncture and Chinese herbs in her new book, *The Wisdom of Menopause*.

Kidney Essence

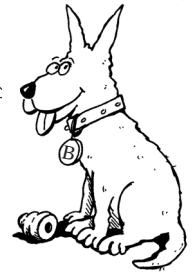
In Chinese theory, the kidneys contain a substance called kidney essence that is fundamental to life. If the essence is good a person will have a strong and robust constitution, if not then they can be susceptible to disease. Essence is also necessary to transform kidney yin and yang into kidney qi. Part of this essence is fixed at birth and part of it can be replenished. A good analogy is that you can recharge a car battery by having a good alternator; in turn, you can recharge the kidney essence by living a balanced lifestyle; but the kidney essence, like the car battery, eventually runs down. Some things can speed up the decline of essence, such as disease, drug abuse, poor diet or too little sleep.

From a Chinese medical perspective, menopause is primarily caused by the decrease in kidney essence. As the essence declines the kidney yin and yang get out of balance and menopausal symptoms occur. The chart shows an example of menopausal symptoms. Both yin (moistening, nourishing and cooling) and yang (warmth, activity, light) are depleted. In this case the patient will have more yin deficient symptoms such as hot flashes, dryness and night sweats, (not enough cooling yin), but she might also have cold



hands and feet (not enough warmth from the yang).

My menopause was surgically induced!



A good illustration of this is shown in the following case. A recent client, a 55-year-old female, complained of severe shin pain when she walked. During her visit I asked if she was still having her period. She was, but not every month. She confirmed that she had night sweats and hot flashes (a kidney yin deficiency), but that usually her hands and feet were cold (a kidney yang deficiency). Her leg pain is considered a stagnation of qi and blood, but in her case I felt that it was made worse by the kidney yin and yang deficiencies. I treated her for the shin pain and also included points and herbs for the other problems. After just one treatment and two weeks on the herbs she reported that her night sweats were less often and less severe. Her leg pain also improved. I recommended continuing on the herbs and monthly treatments. It is important to continue getting treatments because things change as you progress through menopause so treatments and formulas must be adjusted accordingly.

Making Lifestyle Changes

Besides acupuncture and herbs there are lifestyle changes you can do that can ease the path through menopause. From the western perspective, hormone replacement therapy is also an option. However, we're all different and each of us needs to find the course that works best.

Diet: Eat more soy and make sure you get essential fatty acids. Good sources for these fatty acids are high fat fish like salmon, and flax seeds and oil. Eat foods to nourish your bones; see recipe on back page. Reduce sugar, alcohol, and caffeine intake.

Exercise: Include weight-bearing exercises like running, walking, skiing, weight training, yoga, or marshal arts.

Spiritual/Social: This is a perfect time to make time for you. Try something new like calligraphy, dance, or meditation. Join the church choir. Be eccentric if you want to.

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Recipe of the Month

This winter stew recipe good for building strong bones is from Menopausal Years by Susun Weed.

Strong Bone Stew

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1-3 cloves of garlic
- 1 cup quartered mushrooms
- 1 quart of vegetable stock or water
- 1 cup each of any four of the following ingredients: sweet potato, carrot, turnip, winter squash, potato, parsnip, burdock.
- ½ cup dried wakame seaweed, cut or broken into small pieces
- 2 Tablespoons each of miso, tamari, peanut or almond butter
- 1/3 cup tahini
- 1 Tablespoon rice, wine or apple cider vinegar
- 1 cake tofu, cubed

In a large pot, saute onions, garlic and mushrooms in the olive oil. When the onions are soft add the vegetable stock (or water) and bring to a boil. Then add 1 cup each of your four chosen vegetables. Also add the wakame. Simmer for 45 minutes, add more water or broth if needed.

Meanwhile, mix together the miso, tamari, tahini, peanut or almond butter and vinegar. Add this and the tofu to the stew just before serving. Serve hot with whole grain bread or rice.



Marcia Mueller
Lic. Acupuncturist

About Different Drummer Acupuncture

Since she's already eccentric, Marcia is thinking about taking up calligraphy! She competes as a race walker in road races, relays and marathons and is a proponent of cross training (she was injured from over training), so she swims, weightlifts and does yoga to compliment her walking. Athletes are a large part of her practice. Acupuncture is a midlife career change for her. Previously Marcia worked at Nike. During this time she used acupuncture for a back injury and from personal experience discovered the power in this ancient medicine. She is a graduate of Lewis and Clark College and the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine where she received a Masters degree in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. Marcia has been in practice since 1998.