

CLASSICAL CHINESE NUTRITION/ FOOD AS MEDICINE

Classical Chinese medicine places nutrition high atop the *8 Pillar* to Health & Longevity. In this tradition, food is used as medicine. In fact, it is a dictum that even the best herbal therapy is ineffective when there is a poor diet or poor digestion. Chronic substance abuse causes deficiencies, especially yin deficiency. Yin represents the energy that moistens & cools bodily functions. Yin is also the physiological state of rest, repair, rejuvenation & energy storage [anabolism].

- **Foods Especially Useful To Tonify Yin:** alfalfa sprouts, asparagus, kelp, potato, string bean, sweet potato, yam, lemon, lime, mulberry, adzuki bean, black bean, kidney bean, black sesame seed, fresh water clam, oyster, duck, pork kidney, organic chicken eggs.
- **Meat & Dairy:** Fish in general, but especially fresh water clam, crab, cuttlefish, oyster, octopus, sardine. Beef, duck, goose, pork, pork kidney, rabbit, chicken & duck egg.
- **Grains, Nuts & Seeds:** Barley, millet, alfalfa & mung bean sprout, adzuki bean, black bean, kidney bean, lima bean, black sesame seed, walnut, tofu. Mung bean detoxifies LV.
- **Vegetables:** artichoke, asparagus, pea, potato, string bean, sweet potato, tomato, chestnut, yam, zucchini
- **Herbs & Spices, Sea Vegetables, Condiments:** Marjoram, nettles, kelp, nori, honey, malt, American ginseng, royal jelly, aloe vera juice [from the fillet not the whole leaf]
- **Fruit:** Apple, apricot [vitamin A & iron], avocado [medium chain fatty acids do not burden the gallbladder], banana, lemon, lime, mango, mulberry, pear, persimmon, pineapple, watermelon, pomegranate
- **Beverages:** Coconut milk, almond milk

THINGS TO AVOID & RECOMMENDATIONS

Stimulants such as caffeine, alcohol, sugar and pungent spices only further deplete yin. Yin building-foods & herbs have a tendency to congest the spleen and promote stagnation if large amounts are consumed at once. Consume small quantities frequently rather than large helpings irregularly. Avoid shellfish if there are heat signs. Avoid raw & cold foods as this weakens the SP & digestion. Avoid foods that contain tyramine near bedtime because it increases the release of stimulating norepinephrine. Foods with high tyramine content include bacon, cheese, chocolate, eggplant, ham, potatoes, sugar, sausage, spinach, and tomatoes.

Al Dente Vegetables & Fruits. Heat them only until they are a vibrant in color and the texture is slightly soft. This is when the qi is most bioavailable and the food most easily digested without being denatured. Over cooking and microwaving destroys the inherent enzymes needed to help digest that particular food. Bake squash whole, and then chew some of the seeds inside for the EFA and skin for vitamin C.

Whole Grains & Sprouts [for EFA]. Always *soak grains for 1-4 hours*, and then rinse them before cooking. This eliminates the phytic acid, an anti-nutrient that inhibits the complete digestion of whole grains. A single portion of sprouts contains more nutrients than several portions of the vegetable that it becomes. Throw sprouts in the cooling broth or on top of hot food to warm them slightly & access their qi before eating.

Bone Marrow Broth nourishes jing essence. It *must* be from organic grass fed or wild sources. It has the added benefit of being alkalizing. Simmer crosscut bones in water to which a little apple cider vinegar [ACV] has been added. ACV extracts the bone minerals into a broth to drink. Organic ACV also contains many nutrients itself. For a well-rounded alkalizing, nutritious broths add potato peel & parsley [vitamin C rich], daikon radish [alkalizing], carrot tops, and celery [cell salts].

Milk has a long tradition of use for general deficiency. Boiling *pasteurized* cow's milk makes the milk protein more bioavailable & easily digested. Pasteurized goat's milk does not need to be boiled to rectify the milk proteins. *Raw* milk [not to be given to children] has the added benefit of being alkalizing, thus reduced risk of generating dampness. A glass of warm milk with honey before bedtime is helpful for mild insomnia.

Wheat & Jujube Decoction. A classical Chinese herbal formula but also a food remedy when prepared as a stew with beef. Wheat [fu xiao **mai**] is a major source of GABA precursor. Organ meat [especially organ meat] is a source of Alpha-lipoic acid and ATP energy. Jujube [Chinese dates] nourishes qi, blood & the spleen and calms the shen.

Wu Long Cha/ Oolong Tea- John Mini, M.S.C.M., L.Ac., Dipl.Ac says “Amazingly good antidote for the side effects of marijuana. But it has to be the real thing; prepared & imbibed in the traditional ritualistic way. It is for upper to mid-range marijuana syndrome. Wu Long Cha cleans the brain and nervous system, ST, H and K channels. It generates fluids along the mucous membranes, descends and opens intestinal qi and neutralizes many kinds of poisons. It is slightly stimulating and can’t give the support that long-term marijuana users really need. But in a pinch, it’s a very good solution. *The first cup kisses away my thirst... But the seventh—Oh The Seventh Cup—if I drink you, a wind will hurry my wings toward the sacred island.* —Lu Tong (795-835 A.D. trans. Christopher Nelson)”.

Hemp Seed John Mini, M.S.C.M., L.Ac., Dipl.Ac says, “A tempting and elegant solution, but only a partial one [for marijuana syndrome]. Nearly perfect food for humans to eat. Nourishes the blood, opens the intestines in a very mild but completely appropriate way for our purposes.”

MICRONUTRIENTS, SUPPLEMENTS & WESTERN HERBS

Vitamins & Minerals: Magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, and vitamins C, B & E complex are easily depleted by stress.

GABA (Gamma-Amino butyric Acid) is the major inhibitory neurotransmitter [NT] in the brain. It induces calm and tranquility, useful in treatment of schizophrenia, epilepsy, depression, HTN, stress disorders, manic behavior & acute agitation, attention deficit disorder. The GABA receptor is involved in a complex system accounting for 40% of all NT activity in the brain. Located on the GABA receptor are several auxiliary sites that can become occupied by other various NT chemicals [most of which have not been identified yet]. These auxiliary receptors also dock benzodiazepines. When a benzodiazepine occupies the auxiliary site it assists GABA in opening a channel into the neuron on which it is located. Chloride passes through this channel into the neuron. This reduces the firing rate of that neuron and “calms” down activity. Benzodiazepines therefore trick the body into thinking it has enough GABA. The body stops making GABA & GABA receptors. The feedback excitatory fight-or-flight neurotransmitting hormones [epinephrine & norepinephrine] have been over-primed to avoid over sedation by benzodiazepines. During withdrawal, the stimulating effects of epinephrine & norepinephrine predominate over the calming effect of endogenous GABA.

Natural causes of reduced GABA receptor function may be inadequate diet and chronic stress. A genetic polymorphism in the GABA receptors might also reduce the efficiency of GABA NT. There may be GABA receptor inhibitors. There may be reduced serotonin, which is a positive regulator of the GABA and GABA receptor interaction.

When combined with sources of Inositol and B-complex [especially B3/thiamine] a GABA supplement creates a natural tranquilizing effect. An RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) has not been established for GABA. However, 250 mg 3 times a day or 750 mg once a day is recommended for stress. GABA supplementation, within this dose range, has little to no side effects. Some sleepiness has been reported. However, too high GABA supplementation causes increased anxiety, shortness of breath, numbness in mouth, and tingling in the extremities. In extreme cases, GABA may cause a chemical imbalance in the brain, resulting in seizures. Such toxicity, however, is rare. In lieu of GABA supplementation, the endogenous GABA system can be enhanced by food sources of GABA precursors and potentiators. The following foods contain glutamate or glutamic acid [a precursor to GABA], which forms glutamine in the body. The highest concentration of glutamic acid is in almonds, wheat bran and mackerel. In descending order of how much glutamate or glutamic acid is in an average portion:

- Almonds/ Almond milk
- Whole wheat
- Mackerel
- Halibut
- Whole grain oats
- Beef liver
- Walnuts
- Rice bran
- Lentils
- Brown rice
- Potato
- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Banana
- Orange

Taurine is the 2nd major inhibitory NT in the brain providing anti-convulsion and anti-anxiety affects. It helps stop alcohol withdrawal tremors and inhibit epileptic seizures. *Stress* depletes Taurine by pulling it out of the cells into the bloodstream where it gets excreted in the urine. Low serum taurine and high urine taurine indicate taurine deficiency. Taurine assists cells to hold on to minerals. In a study involving 51 college-aged women, researchers found that taurine helped increase iron stores significantly in anemic women. After two weeks of taking 1 gram of taurine daily, not only were the total body iron stores higher, but also their blood cell levels of iron increased to a level equivalent to a transfusion of 3/4 pints of blood [approx 250cc]. The best food source of Taurine is cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel and halibut.

Glycine is the 3rd major inhibitory NT in the brain that enhances alpha waves and reduces excitatory waves. It works throughout the spinal column to relax and ease rigidity. It helps calm episodes of manic depression with its sedative properties. In its intermediate form (dimethylglycine, DMG) it is useful in controlling epilepsy and other abnormal nerve firing. Glycine is manufactured from other amino acids in the liver; it does not have to be obtained through the diet. Glycine is found in high protein foods, such as meat, fish, dairy and legumes. Gelatin is high in glycine.

B-Complex, particularly vitamin B6, regulates the manufacturing of GABA. Persons should eat food sources high in protein when taking vitamin B6. Excellent food sources of vitamin B6 include: green peppers, cauliflower, garlic, yellow-fin tuna, mustard greens, bananas, asparagus, kale, and dry active yeast.

L-Glutamine [RDA 2 to 15 gm per day] is one of the most studied amino acids. It has numerous benefits one of which is assisting in increasing GABA levels. Food sources of glutamine include high-protein foods such as beef, chicken, fish, beans, dairy products.

L-Theanine [RDA 100 mg 3 times a day] is an amino acid also involved in the production of GABA. Black & Green tea are dense with theanine. The quantity of theanine in 1 cup of green or black tea depends on the age & quality of the plant leaves and on the time the tea spends brewing. Quality green tea contains up to 20 mg of theanine per cup. Quality black tea contains up to 22mg per cup. Raw chocolate also contains L-Theanine [[check reference!!](#)] and is higher on the antioxidant scale than commonly known antioxidants [herbal or dietary]. Raw chocolate/ cacao is the medicinal, unrefined, unsweetened version of the *Hershey's chocolate bar*.

Alpha-lipoic Acid comes in two forms. R-ALA is the naturally occurring biologically active form in the body. S-ALA is the unnatural, synthetic byproduct created during the production of alpha lipoic acid. R-ALA has been shown to be up to 12 times as effective as S-ALA. R-ALA is the only form of lipoic acid that the body synthesizes and can safely metabolize. Mitochondria are the main location of lipoic acid use. Mitochondria are the site of critical energy production or the ATP cycle [mitochondria fire] in animals and plants. Lipoic acid is anti-inflammatory, significantly increases cellular and mitochondrial antioxidant activity, increases or maintains levels of other antioxidants such as CoQ10, vitamin C, vitamin E and glutathione; improves memory, reverses cognitive dysfunction, reduces brain damage & protects the brain from neuro-degeneration. Green plants have a high concentration of chloroplasts. Chloroplasts are key spots for energy production, which requires lipoic acid. For this reason, broccoli, spinach, and other green leafy vegetables, especially collard greens or chard, are great food sources of lipoic acid. Body tissues with lots of mitochondria (e.g. organ & muscle meats) are good sources too.

Ornithine: sleep aide

Wild Oats nourish nerves when depression & angst are due to deficiency. Individuals who suffer from neurasthenia- a state of chronic exhaustion, emaciation & depression, may benefit from this herb. Oats, in all its forms, contains silica, which is a micronutrient that helps strengthen the myelin sheath over nerves. It contains nutrients that help the body hold onto calcium [which calms shen & anchors yang]. It provides alkalizing minerals to offset the acidic environment that accompanies illness and physiological stress. Oatstraw is a nutritive tonic for physical & nervous fatigue and is an especially strong nerve tonic for depression [it needs to be decocted for a very long time]. Wholegrain oatmeal & oatbran are beneficial during convalescence because they are easily digestible foods that contain many other nutrients. Wild oat milky seeds [oat grouts] tincture is excellent for stress, anxiety and insomnia.

Scullcap is considered the best nerve sedative & tonic because it is both nutritive [helps rebuild nerve endings] and calming [without narcotic properties]. Scullcap acts on the CNS, cerebrospinal centers and sympathetic nervous system to control irritability and insomnia. It is therefore, a major herb to ease the symptoms accompanying drug & alcohol withdrawal. It also has detoxification and antispasmodic properties, which lessens the severity of spasms, jerks, tremors & delirium tremens.

Valerian contains esters [volatile oil / essential oil], which are sedating. Any tincture form of an herb contains its volatile oils. Both valerian tincture and valerian herb are *very* sedating. The root is especially sedating and used for insomnia, anxiety, and many other kinds of nervous exhaustion disorders. It influences the cerebrospinal system and primary nerve centers to benefit neuralgias. It is important in the rehabilitation from substance abuse. But it is a strong hypnotic and one should take caution when using it concurrently with pharmaceutical hypnotics, opiates, benzodiazepines and alcohol, as one may feel over sedated, spacey and/or depressed.

Grapeseed Extract [Vitis Vinifera] & **Milk Thistle** (*Silybum marianum*, dried seed). Milk thistle is the premier liver herb! It increases protein synthesis in liver cells, which activates its regenerative capacity. It protects the liver against many toxins and protects individuals from acute or long-term toxins by preventing the release or production of negative liver enzymes. Both Milk Thistle and grapeseed extract are excellent hepato-protectives & anti-oxidants.

Other Western Herbs for Smoking Cessation:

- Lobelia- substitute for nicotine
- centella asiatica – blood circulation and memory
- mimosa flower- after affects of abstinence, HA & anxiety, prevents relapse
- Saint John's Wort- mental attitude, depression
- Hyssop- anxiety and hysteria
- Motherwort – anxiety, tranquility in heat
- Mullein leaf & root (tea, tincture)

