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Traditional Chinese Medical Food Therapy

Dietary therapy is an extension of herbal therapy in Chinese medicine. Foods are categorized according to Chinese medical systems based upon Yin and Yang, the Five Elements/Phases and the Eight Principles. Foods are looked upon for the inherent energies they possess. Food has its own life experiences, that is, where and how it is grown, the conditions of the soil or feed, the types of environmental influences in which they flourish or perish. The food's attributes are utilized to balance disorders of humans or animals, and maximize health and well being.

The purpose of medical food therapy may be to restore muscle mass, increase stamina, bolster immunity or regulate the circulation. When regulating circulation, one would use "cooling foods" to decrease panting, fever or other heat symptoms. One would use "warming foods" to enhance circulation and warm extremities or treat chronic loose stool.

Foods can also be used to regulate behavioral attitudes, strengthen specific organs, nourish bones and joints and heal skin eruptions. In short, foods are used to balance the individual. In this day of increasing use of commercial convenience foods, practitioners are seeing an increase in skin allergies and other chronic conditions. Medical Food Therapy can be used as an adjunct to any treatment protocols you use.

Food Characteristics

Individuals experience certain sensations during and after eating food. Medical Food Therapy categorizes these sensations into characteristics that the food produces when ingested. The categories we will look at are: directions, flavors, thermal qualities, moisture retention and Meridian influences.

Directions

This applies to the sensation as and after the food is ingested. The directions are

Upward - enlivens energy, reverses sluggishness

Treats prolapses and incontinence

Examples chicken, chicken egg, lamb, venison, goat, shrimp, oats, corn

Downward - helps to relieve fluid congestion in lungs, abdomen, vagina
"sinks" hyper activity

Examples beef, carp, oyster (nervousness), clam (leucorrhea)

Barley, wheat, soybean, oyster shell, lettuce

Outward - useful for acute conditions to rid virus, infection (wind invasion)

Foods stimulate circulation at skin surface

Examples onion, garlic, cayenne pepper, fresh ginger, peppermint

Inward, centering - eat for focus or in winter to quiet thoughts and body

Sea weed, crab, celery, brown rice

FLAVORS

In addition to the sensation of liking or disliking certain foods, flavor performs different functions in the body. There are five flavors plus one that is neutral. They are: *Sweet, Sour, Pungent, Salty, Bitter* and Bland.

Sweet increases the Qi and improves digestion of the Spleen/Pancreas and Stomach.

Many of our foods are sweet. Examples include

Beef, carp, shrimp, herring, sardine, white fish, mackerel, chicken, lamb

Corn, rice, squash, most legumes

Sour acts as an astringent which tightens mucus membranes in the digestive, respiratory Urinary, and reproductive tracts.

Examples include: *raspberry leaves, lemon, lime*

Sweet + Sour combination includes: *plum, pomegranate, grapefruit, grape, peach, Tomato*

Pungent helps stimulate circulation, increase sweating, breaks up mucus accumulation.

Examples include: *onions, ginger, basil, garlic, mustard greens*

Salty helps to soften cysts and tumors.

Examples include: *sea weeds, sardines, most fish*

Sweet & Salty combination includes: *pork, millet, barley*

Bitter detoxifies and tones digestion. It also relieves constipation.

Examples include: *lettuce, celery, burdock, rye, dandelion, green tea, asparagus, Broccoli (bitter + pungent)*

THERMAL CHARACTERISTICS

This category is based on how an individual feels *after eating certain foods*. The choices include *cooling, warming, hot and neutral*.

Cooling decreases inflammation, curtails hot tempers

Examples include: *celery, millet, wheat, pork liver, sheep liver, lima beans, Strawberries, blueberries*

Warming helps improve circulation, regulates sluggish digestion, warms conditions that Are worse in cold weather, such as arthritis.

Examples include: *chicken, lamb, shrimp, lobster, mussels, salmon*
Venison, oats, spelt, sweet rice, onions, squash, ginger

Hot incurs dramatic warming.

Examples include: *trout, lamb, cayenne, dry ginger, turmeric*

Neutral foods are used as overall balancers. These foods assist in coordinating the
Extremes of other foods.

Examples include: *potato, rice, corn, pork, rabbit, eggs, carp, herring,*
Sardine, white fish, mackerel, pork, goat

DRYING DAMPNES & MOISTENING

These foods encourage appropriate water metabolism and regulation.

Foods to dry dampness include *carp, whitefish, lentils, rye, peas, kidney beans*
Fava bean, parsnip

Foods to moisten include: *soybeans, herring, dairy, sugar, green beans*

MERIDIAN INFLUENCE

Utilizing the Five Element/Phase system, there are five categories to encourage
healthy circulation through each of the *meridians* which are energy highways connected
with internal organ systems. Using these foods strengthens the organ involved.

Spleen/Stomach *barley, rice, millet, chicken, chicken egg, ginger*

Lung/Large Intestine *duck, goose, bean curd, corn, cabbage,*
Castor beans, mushrooms, figs, garlic, honey, yams

Kidney/Urinary Bladder *carp, pork, mutton, chestnut, green beans, barley*
Egg, clams, fennel, sea salt, wheat

Liver/Gall Bladder *beef, pork liver, wheat, celery, leek, plum, lemon, vinegar*

Heart/Small Intestine *lamb, millet, rye, wheat, grape*

KITCHEN SPICES

Culinary spices are an easy way to manage or manipulate food characteristics.
The spices are mild herbs. Leggett, HelpingOurselves

Warming & Pungent

Aniseed
Basil
Bay leaf
Caraway
Cardamom
Chive
Cinnamon twig

Cooling & Neutral

coriander seed
marjoram
mint
nettle
saffron
tamarind

Clove
Cumin
Dill
Ginger
Nutmeg
Oregano
Turmeric

CLINICAL CONDITION GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are meant to act in conjunction with proper medical diagnosis. These are guidelines only and some animals may respond differently, so it is important to monitor your patient.

Hyperactivity

Use foods that cool and or calm. Examples include:

*Turkey, white fish or bottom fish, crab, kelp
Celery, lettuce, millet, wheat*

Renal Disorders

Kidney Yin deficiency with symptoms of thirst, constipation, dry cough, back weakness. Examples include:

Use moistening foods such as *garbanzo beans, potato, green beans
Squash, barley, peas, eggs, sardines, fresh tuna*

Kidney Yang deficiency with symptoms of copious pale urine, watery diarrhea, water vomiting, weak and cold lower back and extremities.

Use warming and Spleen strengthening foods such as *oats, barley,
Chicken, rabbit, beef, goat*

Arthritis

Avoid high amounts of red meat, dairy or wheat.

Use chicken, turkey, fish, millet, barley, oats, legumes

Vegetables with high mineral content, such as cabbage, carrots,

Parsnips

If the arthritis is worse in damp weather, *use drying foods* such as

Rye, amaranth, celery, turnip, mackerel, beans

If the arthritis is worse in dry weather, *use moistening foods* such as

Pork, sardine, potato

If the arthritis is worse in cold weather, *use warming foods* such as

Chicken, oats

Acute Diarrhea

Use broths of *miso, chicken, or rice*

Rice Broth is called *congee* and is made by slow cooking 7 parts water with 1 part rice over several hours and low heat until the rice granules fall apart. This mixture is

extremely soluble and soothing through the stomach and upper intestinal lining. Protein sources in small amounts are added as the condition improves.

Constipation

Constipation can be primarily from dryness, or from stagnation along with heat.

If the stool is dry, crumbly and the patient is not concerned about missing a day of bowel movement, use *foods to moisten dryness* such as *well cooked brown rice, millet, steamed sweet potatoes, yellow squash, pumpkin, peas, soft boiled eggs, de-fatted pork*.

If the patient is straining and usually heat intolerant, try foods that *move stagnation and are cooling* such as *cod, soy beans, millet, cabbage, cucumbers, spinach, pumpkin, banana*.

Temperament Modulation

Hyper

Brown Rice, Millet
Raw beef
De-fatted pork
Duck, goose
Cod
Garbanzo, kidney, fava, lima beans
Celery
Lettuce
Seaweed

Sluggish

rolled oats, sweet potato, corn
lamb
venison
chicken
goat
liver, heart
sardines
kale
squash
carrots

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