

Eating for the Season

By Katie Johnson, DC, LAc

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the principles of nutrition go beyond macronutrients and caloric value and focus on the *energetic influence* of food. TCM nutrition also considers each person's individual constitution when making dietary recommendations. A person who is weak, pale, and tends to be cold should eat differently from someone who is robust, red-faced and energetic. Intuitively, this makes sense to most of us. When you have a cold, chicken soup is comforting, but energetically it warms the body and strengthens the immune function.

As we move into winter, I'd like to share with you how to keep your energy high and your body strong by eating for the season. First, let's establish some basic understanding. TCM teaches that during winter, we can strengthen our bodies against the cold by eating warming foods and avoiding cold foods/drinks. In our particular climate, we also deal with a lot of dampness, which presents another challenge. The external climate factors of cold and dampness cause us to feel tired, sluggish and depressed. Symptoms of dampness are made worse by the overeating of raw or cold foods.

Foods and spices which are warming include red meat, chicken, lamb, garlic, onion, scallion, chili pepper, ginger, cinnamon, black pepper, black beans, quinoa and walnuts. In addition to warming and pungent foods, foods with a salty or bitter flavor also strengthen our energy during winter. Turnips, asparagus, oats, quinoa, chicory and citrus peels have a bitter flavor. Foods like soy sauce, miso, seaweed, millet and barley are considered salty.

Dr. Katie Johnson is an integrative practitioner, using principles from naturopathic and traditional Chinese medicine to help her patients experience their best health. She has practices in St. Charles and Downers Grove. For more information or to schedule an appointment, go to www.lotushealthcenter.com or call (630) 474-2720.