

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

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Protect Your Lungs the TCM Way

The recent fires throughout Southern California threatened and affected the lives of thousands. These fires consumed much oxygen, generated abundant amounts of carbon dioxide, and burned compounds and chemicals which can have a harmful impact on the respiratory system. Symptoms will include; an irritated throat, dry cough, difficult breathing, and asthma related symptoms. The current air quality can also provoke infection of the respiratory system.

TCM teaches that the Lungs are the organs which control the nose and throat. These are the most delicate organs in the body because they are the only organs that open our bodies directly to the outside world. Any internal organ disharmony and external pathogens can invade the Lungs through these organs.

Dry air damages the lungs.

Dry cold air happens mostly during the fall or early spring seasons. Dry air consumes body fluids that moisten the lungs, throat and nose. When the lungs become dry symptoms that may develop are; irritated and scratchy throat, dry cough or cough with small amounts of thick mucus. These can be also be accompanied by tiny amounts of blood or nose bleeds due to the dry air. After the fires in Southern California, the air is not only dry, but is filled with smoke, ash and a variety of pollutants that are even more detrimental to the respiratory system. Wearing a respiratory mask will protect us from inhaling ash, smoke and pollutants to some degree but we cannot protect ourselves from the dry air.

What should we do to protect the lungs?

- I. **Limit eating hot and spicy food and reduce alcohol intake:** Hot and spicy foods can add more heat to the body and continue to consume body fluids that moisten the lungs. Unfortunately, simply drinking more water aids only minimally in producing the specific fluids that protect the lungs. Drinking alcohol will also expend body fluids and dehydrate the body. **Traditional Chinese Medicine** believes that during the fall season, one should avoid hot & spicy foods, instead adding some sour tasting foods into the diet which preserve body fluids. Citrus fruits, berries, pineapples, apples, plums. The best fruit for moistening the lungs is the Asian pear which ripens in the fall.

II. TCM; A natural drink for healthy lungs:

- A. 10 whole Asian pears (cut each pear into 3-4 pieces), 2 pieces of red date, 3 slices of fresh ginger with one gallon of water. Cook all ingredients together until pears become very soft. Eat the pears and add some honey into the juice and drink as tea. This moistens and soothes the throat and lungs.
- B. One big Asian pear cut in half horizontally. Take out core. Add Chuan Bei Mu powder (10g) and white rock sugar (30g) into the center of the pear. Put the two halves back together to look like whole pear again. Then put the pear with herbal powder inside in a big container and steam for 40 minutes. Eat the whole pear and drinks the juice while it is still warm.
- C. Treatment of dry cough with dry lips: White Turnip Juice, (500g) and add 10-15g of honey. Sip it as tea. This drink moistens the lungs, liquefies mucus, and soothes breathing. It also detoxifies the body and helps to lower blood pressure.

III. Food therapy for healthy lungs:

- A. Pine Nut Rice congee: Add pine nuts (20g) and white rice (60g) to water and boil until rice becomes a thin paste. Serve as soup twice a day. This dish moistens the lungs, soothes dry cough, calms the heart for better sleep, and moistens the bowels. **Ancient Chinese doctors also believe that pine nut congee promotes well being and longevity.**
- B. Mai Men Dong Congee:
Mai Men Dong (Ophiopogonis Tuber): 30g. Cook in water for 20-30 minutes and save the herbal juice.
- C. White rice: 60g. Cook to make congee. Add the herbal juice into the rice congee and boil the whole congee again. Can serve as dessert by adding white rock sugar. Eat twice a day.

These dishes treat dry cough, dry throat and moistens the lungs. They also soothe the stomach and help to prevent heart disease. TCM also believes that Mai Men Dong is one of the many anti-aging herbs available.

Teas and food therapy can be used every fall & dry season to nourish the lungs and prevent pathogens from damaging the lungs, as well as assist in other health related treatments.

Please contact the office of Dr. Helen H. Hu for an appointment today!

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