



CHILDREN AND ORIENTAL MEDICINE

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In many ways, both internally and externally, children's bodies are quite immature. A child's digestive system, for example, will not become mature until he or she is about seven to eight years old. Before this time children are prone to many common ailments such as regular coughs and colds, glue ear and tummy upsets. Oriental Medicine attributes the susceptibility to various ills as a direct manifestation of an immature or weakened digestive system. As their digestive systems become more robust many of these childhood ailments simply disappear. So, the question is, how can we easily and effectively treat and help prevent many of these common childhood ailments in a way that is ultimately strengthening to their immune systems and avoids the regular use of treatments such as antibiotics, cortisone, steroids or grommets?

Oriental Medicine has an answer: strengthen the child's digestive system – this can be done with a gentle treatment of acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine and dietary changes. Oriental Medicine recognises, for example, a direct causal relation between digestion and lung problems. It is a weakened digestive system that is the source of the substance "phlegm" which then collects in the lungs. Phlegm is seen to be the by-product of poorly digested food and drink.

You may already be aware of the benefits of avoiding certain foods when you are particularly sniffily. The reason for this is that certain foods have a tendency to exacerbate phlegm production and this phlegm then obstructs and inhibits the natural flow of energy through the lungs. This then aggravates or sometimes triggers the onset of respiratory tract ailments such as stuffy or runny noses, sneezing, coughing and even

asthma. All of this can ultimately be attributable to a weak digestive system.

Given that a child's digestion is immature, eating inappropriate foods can easily damage it. Treatment therefore involves strengthening the digestion and in this, diet plays a pivotal role in both the prevention and treatment of illness. Often what we believe is a healthy diet for children may be "less than beneficial" for some according to Oriental Medicine and many children's illnesses can be markedly relieved by simple modification of the child's diet. This process can then be enhanced and supported with acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine.

Digestion in Oriental Medicine is seen as a process of "internally cooking food into a soup". If the food that we eat is already cooked to some extent, it becomes easier to digest. Uncooked foods do have more vitamins and enzymes than cooked foods; however, the nutrients are held within the cell walls of the food. In order to get at the nutrients these cells must be broken down. This is accomplished by chewing well and by the digestive process. As young children do not tend to chew efficiently and because their digestive processes are inherently weak (note how undigested carrots look in a nappy), they are not as efficient at breaking down these cells as adults are. Cooking is another way we can breakdown the cells that surround these vital nutrients. Although cooking may destroy some of these nutrients, what is left is more easily assimilable and so children can better benefit from them. Cold and raw foods also weaken the digestive system because these foods require considerably more energy to warm them up to body temperature within the stomach.

If a child has become ill, from any cause, then eating beneficial foods can speed the healing process. A child may initially refuse to eat 'healthy' alternatives, or may cry and crave for what he or she is used to eating, but as long as parents are consistent, and strong in their convictions, the child is eventually going to eat what they are offered.

Oriental Medicine sees our life force as being produced from a combination of the energy of the food we eat and the air we breathe. Therefore, together with an appropriate diet, children should also be encouraged to play outside where they can fill their lungs with plenty of fresh air. The combination of a good diet, adequate exercise and sufficient rest ensures you are on your way to a happy, healthy child.

To facilitate the process of restoring your children to good health seek the counsel of an Oriental Medicine practitioner who uses a gentle Acupuncture technique, especially modified for children and babies. This therapy can be combined with the use of Chinese Herbal granules that can be mixed with honey or apple sauce for ease of administration. Although children are easily susceptible to illnesses, they also bounce back to health quickly and easily so it usually takes only a few treatments when appropriate dietary modifications are also made within the home.