



Integrative Health Link

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The Real Secret to a Healthy Digestion

Warm Digestion – The core to a healthy digestion

- What is a Warm Digestion?
- Why is keeping a Warm Digestion important?

If you can adhere to the principle of keeping a warm digestion – you can avoid a lot of digestive problems. With a world full of constant suggestions about different types of diets and supplements, how do you know what to do? If you know how to keep your digestion warm, you will be able to make better decisions about all diets and supplements out there no matter what the latest trend is.

First of all - a warm digestion is not someone who eats a lot of spicy food! In Chinese Medicine, all foods have a temperature (and this doesn't mean from cooking per say). That is, all foods have a natural temperature from cool to hot. If you can think of your digestion as a soup pot that needs to reach a certain temperature to begin to 'cook' the food. With this in mind, the more cooling foods and drinks you have, it will take your digestion that much more effort to 'heat' it up to digest.

For example: iced drinks and ice cream are cold (common sense)

But did you know:

- That soy is cooler than rice? And rice is cooler than oats?
- Did you know that chicken is cooler than beef?
- Most fruits are cool?
- Raw salads are cool?

Thus, what we might think is healthy, may not be for our digestion, or it might be

better to eat certain foods in different seasons. For instance, eat warm cooked foods in winter and more fruits and salads in summer.

If your digestion is weaker, (signs would include sluggish digestion, gas, bloating, abdominal distention, reflux, fatigue after eating, food allergies or sensitivities, irregular bowel movements, frequent illnesses and colds, and chronic runny noses) then adhering to a warm digestion is more important all year around.

General principles to keep your digestion warm

Chinese Medicine is about seeking balance. The same is true with food and digestion. Having a nice balance of temperatures, flavors and foods greatly enhances health. Cooking cooler foods with warmer spices for instance, makes the cooler foods warmer and easier to digest. Fermenting cooler foods begins the process of digestion.

An example of a Warm Digestion on a daily basis:

- Start your day with a warm, cooked breakfast preferably include a protein.
- Eat cooked foods in cooler/cold weather.
- Only eat significant amounts of frozen foods, fruits, raw veggies (includes salads) in warmer weather, but avoid predominantly if your digestion is cool no matter what the climate is.
- Avoid eating left-overs right out of the refrigerator without warming.
- Eat soy products in moderation as they are cold.
- When eating dairy, choose dryer and harder cheeses, plain or neutral flavors of yogurt (adding cinnamon will warm yogurt up).
- Have cool smoothies mostly in warmer times of year or add spices such as ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg.
- Rarely have drinks with ice cubes in them, unless it is summer.

Examples of Food Lists from cold – hot

- Fruits are cooler than Vegetables.
- Vegetables are cooler than Grain and Legumes.
- Grains and Legumes are cooler than Animal Meats.
- Oil and Spices tend to be in their own category.

Fruits

Cold: banana, blueberry, cantaloupe, cranberry, grapefruit, mango, persimmon, rhubarb, tomato, watermelon, mulberry, plum, kiwi

Cool: apple, avocado, black current, prunes, tangerine, pear, oranges, coconut

Neutral: apricot, loquat, papaya, pomegranate, tangerine, peaches, mume plum, lemon

Warm: blackberry, cherry, dates, grape, litchi, longan, quince, raspberry, strawberry, kumquat, figs

Hot: pineapple

Vegetables

Cold: Asparagus, chinese cabbage, seaweed, snow peas, water chestnuts, dandelion leaf, white mushroom

Cool: Artichoke, bok choy, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumber, daikon radish, eggplant, mushroom, spinach, swiss chard, turnip, zucchini, alfalfa sprouts, bamboo shoots, carrot, endive, potato, romaine lettuce, tomato

Neutral: beets, carrot, cabbage, lettuce, shitake mushroom, olive, peas, pumpkin, yam

Warm: bell peppers, chive, green bean, kale, leek, mustard greens, parsley, parsnip, squash, sweet potato, watercress, scallions, onion, fennel, oyster mushroom

Hot: garlic, green onion

Grains/Legumes/Nuts:

Cold: wheat germ

Cool: amaranth, barley, buckwheat, millet, wheat, wild rice, lima beans, mung beans, soybean

Neutral: brown rice, corn, flax, white rice, almonds, chick peas, hazelnut, peanut, pistachio, pumpkin, sunflower seeds

Warm: oats, quinoa, safflower, spelt, black bean, chestnut, pine nut, sesame seed, walnut

Animal Products

Cold: clam, crab, octopus

Cool: eggs, pork, duck

Neutral: abalone, rabbit, cheese, duck, goose, herring, mackerel, milk, oysters, salmon, sardine, shark, tuna, chicken

Warm: beef, anchovy, butter, chicken, eel, ham, lobster, mussels, shrimp, turkey, venison, fresh water fish, sheep, goat, sheep milk.

Hot: lamb, trout

Spices/Oils

Cold: salt, white pepper

Cool: marjoram, mint, peppermint, tamarind, cilantro leaf, sesame oil

Neutral: coriander, licorice, saffron, olive oil, peanut oil

Warm: anise, basil, bay leaf, carob, caraway, clove, cumin, dill seed, fennel, fenugreek, fresh giner, nutmeg, oregano, rosemary, sage, spearmint, thyme, jasmine, coriander

Hot: black pepper, cayenne pepper, chili pepper, cinnamon, dry ginger, horseradish, wasabi, mustard, garlic