

## Acupuncture for Weight Loss

It seems that everybody is always looking for a quick fix or the easiest way out. That is definitely no different when it comes to weight loss. Think about the number of fad diets that have come and gone over the past decade. And the outcome is always the same, weight is lost but it always comes back, sometimes worse than before the diet began. Why? Because a diet is not the answer. Lifestyle changes are what is needed when somebody wants to lose weight. This is where a system like Traditional Chinese Medicine becomes a good choice for those who truly want or need to lose weight and keep it off.

According to TCM, excess weight is rooted in an imbalance within the body caused by the malfunctioning of the liver and spleen organ systems and energetic meridians. In TCM theory, the spleen is responsible for proper functioning of the digestive system. When the spleen is functioning properly, the food we eat is transformed into Qi (pronounced "chee"). Qi is the vital substance of life and when there is disharmony in the spleen, there will be symptoms such as fatigue, slow metabolism, water retention, feelings of heaviness and loose stools. The liver system is supposed to keep the body's Qi and blood flowing and running smoothly. Unfortunately, our fast-paced modern lifestyle and chronic stress levels tend to negatively impact the liver's ability to function properly. Because the liver and spleen work in conjunction, when one isn't functioning properly, neither is the other. This leads to a poorly functioning digestive system that decreases metabolism and can trigger cravings.

The acupuncture points, foods and herbal supplements used in TCM are specifically chosen to assist with weight loss and influence the Qi of the spleen and liver systems, thus treating the root imbalances causing the weight gain to begin with. Physically, TCM has been shown to have an effect on the function of the nervous system, the endocrine system, the digestive system, food cravings and metabolism. All of these things help to maximize the absorption of nutrients, energize the body, control overeating, suppress the appetite and reduce anxiety.

Unlike most fad diets, acupuncture treatments are catered and customized to the needs of the individual. Acupuncture points can be used to affect the overall well-being of the patient with the objective of increasing circulation and calming the nervous system. Also, specific points can be incorporated to help with different symptoms as they arise. Auricular or ear acupuncture points have been found to be particularly effective for helping with weight loss.

Another way TCM differs from fad diets in treating weight loss is that TCM is a total health program. Not only are acupuncture treatments used, but other modalities such as herbal formulas, energetically healing foods, abdominal massage, exercise and meditation are usually suggested and recommended to the patient. This insures those who utilize TCM to lose weight usually have a better chance of keeping it off.

If you're trying to lose weight, why not consider acupuncture and TCM as your method of choice? It is much less radical than a fad diet and the outcomes are usually better and more permanent. To find out more, contact your local licensed acupuncturist.

### Congee: Easy Comfort Food For The Whole Family

Congee, or rice porridge, might be a new and savory surprise for your kids, but this healthy and simple dish has been served for many years in Asian cultures. Let's take a look at how this breakfast alternative might delight your whole family's palate.

Congee, otherwise known as rice gruel or rice porridge, has been widely enjoyed both as a breakfast food and overall dietary aid in Asian cultures. In the practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine, it is not recommended to eat cold foods, especially in the morning, as it is hard on the digestion and transportation of food throughout the body. Many people in the West start the morning off with cold milk, sugary cereal, yogurt or fruit smoothies. Not only are those items too cold, but they may also be high in sugar and lacking nutrition. On the other hand, congee is a healthy, nutritious, warming meal given to children in Asian cultures that is delicious, very simple to make and can be flavored many different ways to taste.

Some benefits of congee include its uses as a dietary aid for digestive issues such as poor appetite, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Congee is healthy for young, developing stomachs, it is filling, warming to the body and easily absorbed. Congee is often eaten when one is under the weather, at the beginning stages of cold or flu. Eating it just feels good to the body and its preparation stimulates the senses. This hearty dish can be made more nutritious by adding herbs, spices, vegetables or meats to enrich the flavor.

Here is a simple recipe to make basic congee or rice porridge. You can add what you and your family prefer, make it sweeter, add a kick, a touch of salt or keep it bland.

1 cup rice

6-8 cups water

2 cups chicken stock

Wash the rice and drain twice

Boil water with rice and chicken stock added, reduce to simmer, then partially cover

Keep mixture on stove for 1 1/2 hours on stove, stir occasionally  
Serve and garnish

Examples of popular additions to congee include ginger, garlic, chicken, pork or beef.

In addition to this recipe, a simple search on the Internet can show you other ways of making congee. There are also recipes specific to cooking congee in a rice cooker or crock pot. Give congee a try. Congee is a soothing, easy porridge that just might be the perfect addition to your family's breakfast, lunch or dinner table.