

Common Illnesses of Women

Insights from Chinese medicine

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There are a group of clinical conditions that commonly affect women. They include migraine, depression, insomnia, irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, PMS, and chronic fatigue syndrome.

There is also a common thread through these illnesses when they are examined from the perspective of ancient Chinese medicine. In this paradigm, such conditions very often have a similar energy imbalance involving the wood element, which manifests in the liver and gall bladder meridians, one of the many energy networks in the human body.

At the energy or qi level, liver regulates digestion. Stagnated liver energy can cause esophageal reflux, bloating, and alternating constipation and diarrhea.

The liver meridian extends to the eyes, affecting vision and its functional partner, the gall bladder meridian, extends around the temporal area of the head. Hence, when liver-gall bladder energy is imbalanced, it can cause visual disturbances and temporal headaches, like migraines.

Liver energy nourishes tendons, ligaments, and the fascia of the human body. It is also in charge of the free flow of energy throughout the whole body. When liver energy is deficient or stagnated, pain occurs all over the body, particularly in the ligament areas of joints.

Classic tenets of ancient Chinese medicine state that wherever there is energy blockage or energy deficiency, there is pain. If you examine the trigger points of fibromyalgia, they often correspond to liver-gallbladder acupuncture points.

Liver energy regulates menstruation, and its meridians go through the breast, stomach, and uterus. When liver energy is disturbed, irregular periods, cramps with breast tenderness, and indigestion will occur.

Qi stagnation can cause blood stagnation. Dark clots are often observed with menstrual flow. If the conditions persist for a long time, uterine fibroids or fibrocystic breast disease may develop.

According to ancient Chinese medicine, liver energy regulates blood storage and

houses the ethereal soul. Sufficient blood regulation by liver energy is crucial for having a peaceful mind and a restful sleep at night, as well as having good vision and alertness during the day.

The peak time of liver energy is from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. Disturbed sleep during this time often indicates liver energy problems.

Liver is a function of the wood element, which has a regulatory effect on digestion. The earth element also has a direct effect on digestion through the stomach and spleen meridians.

The earth element's effect on digestion relates primarily to the absorption and assimilation of food and nutrients. When there is excessive liver (wood) energy, it can override earth energy.

Consequently, energy from food and nutrition can be affected, resulting in fatigue and a slow metabolism. So, although it may initially appear as if the problem is a primary earth deficiency, it may really be a wood [element] excess.

When we examine human beings at the energy level, it is impossible to separate mental and physical function, or mind and body. Physical dysfunction will disturb emotional and mental status and vice versa.

In ancient Chinese medicine, liver energy is affected primarily by the emotion of anger and its related emotions, such as irritability, frustration, rage, jealousy, depression, and disappointment. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of your emotional state and the psychological aspects of your life.

If you have a prolonged problem with one of the conditions listed above, you may want to consider exploring unresolved anger with a mental health professional as part of your overall treatment plan. Daily meditation and life cultivation with Falun Dafa [a practice of mind, body, and spirit] can also be of tremendous benefit.

For the heat that liver stagnation might cause, you may want to avoid spicy foods, such as hot peppers, which create additional heat in your body. Green-colored food is normally good for liver energy.

Since liver energy has its peak time at 1 to 3 in the morning, you really want to sleep well during this time. Staying up late might trigger or aggravate migraine headaches and other problems associated with liver imbalance. If you wake up frequently during this period of time, consider the possibility of a life situation whose emotions affect your liver energy balance.

Positive emotions that nourish liver are compassion, kindness, benevolence, and

generosity. Any practice that helps to cultivate these positive attributes should be very helpful.

Acupuncture and Chinese herbal remedies are the modalities that enable trained health professionals to manipulate and balance energy status. They can be very helpful when the appropriate evaluation is made, the correct points are chosen, and proper techniques are used.