

Summer & the Fire Element

Valerie Schwankl, MAOM, L.Ac.

To have a deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese medicine, I often encourage my patients to explore the art of seasonal living. The relationship between yin and yang, and the theory of the five elements are two of the foundations upon which all of Chinese medicine is built. The five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal and water) are cyclical and represent a continuous natural movement that can be felt and observed throughout the changing seasons.

The Fire element is most strongly felt during the summer season, a time of full expression. The seeds of spring are coming to fruition and there is an upward and outward movement of yang energy, which can be seen and felt all around us. The natural world really comes to life in the summer season.

It is natural for physical activity to increase during this time, as the days are longer, and we are exposed to more sunshine and warmth. This is a time to explore one's joy and cultivate what's meaningful within our hearts. What moves you to be active and excited about life?

FIRE ELEMENT

Season	~	Summer
Direction	~	South
Color	~	Red
Taste	~	Bitter
Yin Organs	~	Heart & Pericardium
Yang Organs	~	Small Intestine & San Jiao
Sense Organ	~	Tongue
Tissues	~	Blood Vessels
Emotion	~	Joy
Sound	~	Laughter

enjoy iced drinks or frozen yogurt, these actually have a very damaging effect on the spleen and stomach Qi. Consuming too much of cold, dampening substances, like ice cream or cold smoothies, can injure the digestive fire and lead to symptoms such as gas, bloating, and phlegm.

Beverages at room temperature or even warm are ideal for optimal hydration. Mung bean soup is also excellent for nourishing fluids while eliminating toxins in the digestive tract. Seasonal melons and vegetables, such as cucumbers, are delicious, hydrating alternatives to frozen drinks and sweets.

When the Fire element is out of balance, issues such as anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, mouth sores, irritability, and cardiovascular and

circulatory conditions can arise. These (and many other conditions) can be effectively addressed with acupuncture and Chinese herbs.

As an acupuncturist, I always recommend a seasonal consultation with your practitioner to explore foods and activities that best suit your unique constitution. Everyone's physiology is different, and there is never a one-size-fits-all approach to Chinese medicine. Now is the perfect time for a tune-up. Book your appointment today! ■



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Part of living seasonally means eating seasonally. You might be wondering why the taste for Fire is bitter? (See chart.) The bitter flavor actually works to drain excessive heat. Consuming bitter spices or cooling, bitter herbs and teas in the summertime can help to balance out the excessive, hot, yang energy of the season. Chrysanthemum, chamomile, and peppermint tea are excellent for countering the summer heat.

Enjoying spicy foods in moderation is also a way to clear excessive heat since these will promote sweating. In general, it is important to not overindulge in any one flavor or temperature, but to enjoy a balance of tastes and flavors. The summer season offers the most variety!

Hydration is important since Montana's climate is particularly dry. While it might be tempting to



VALERIE SCHWANKL is an Acupuncturist and Chinese herbalist licensed by the Montana Board of Medical Examiners. She is owner of Vitality Acupuncture, conveniently located in downtown Bozeman. Valerie is happy to offer a free 30-min. consultation to answer any questions you may have about how Chinese

medicine can help you! For more information on her services please visit VitalityMontana.com or call (406) 595-4722.