

EARLY SPRING RECOMMENDATIONS

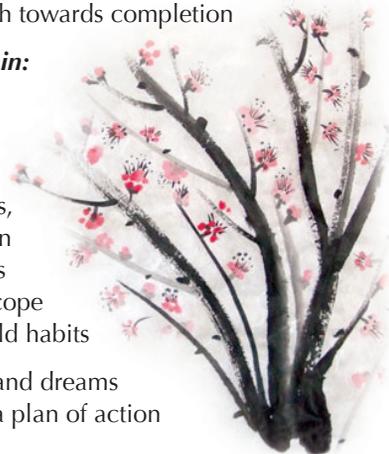
As winter turns into spring, the potential energy that has been stored and condensed in winter begins to stir and becomes activated into a fresh, new energy. In early spring we start to feel this activity and aliveness; however, since nature is just beginning to show life and is still quite barren, it is important not to charge forward but to allow the fledgling spring energy to slowly take hold. Tiny seedlings are starting to come through the frozen ground; trees are starting to bud. This energy of early spring is fragile and can also be unpredictable, as exemplified by the erratic wind this time of year. In early spring the thick protective fluids of winter become thinner; as a result, wind can enter the body more easily, which can make one susceptible to colds. To maintain health during this transitional time, consider these recommendations:

- **Continue to conserve energy:** now is a time to be more active than in winter, but wait until summer to return to full activity; rest and nap
- **Deeply clean your house:** reduce congestion and clutter by getting rid of the old and making room for the new
- **Stretch:** practice yoga, qi gong, tai ji
- **Rise earlier in the morning**

ACCORDING TO CHINESE MEDICINE, the best way for us to maintain health is to have an appropriate **RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR ENVIRONMENT**. In addition to acupuncture and Chinese herbs, learning to live harmoniously with natural, seasonal cycles can be a powerful way of promoting our wellness and resolving illness.

If we can **ALLOW OUR BODIES TO ADAPT** to the different seasons, to the qi as it changes throughout the year, then health will flow naturally. Taoists closely observed the **NATURAL QI CYCLES** of 24 different seasons in order to harmonize their energy with that of their environment. The following daily practices and dietary recommendations are based on this tradition.

- **Eat smaller meals:** graze, don't eat too much at once
- **Go with the fresh energy of spring:** allow things to happen, don't push towards completion
- **Be generous, entertain:** have friends over for the lunar new year
- **Be like a child:** be playful, ask questions, think differently, learn new things, do things outside your usual scope of interest, let go old habits
- **Plan:** take the ideas and dreams of winter and make a plan of action





FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECIPES

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There are few fresh foods

available during early spring. It is still a time to eat winter foods along with the pungent and bitter plants that are starting to become available and that kick-start lingering winter sluggishness. Scallions and spring onions are especially helpful since they activate the thick fluids of winter. Eat small, new foods (seeds, sprouts, eggs, mushrooms, beans) that represent the burgeoning energy of early spring. Pickles are also especially beneficial for stimulating the liver and circulation.

Foods to emphasize:

continue to eat the foods that have stored well through the winter such as root vegetables (carrots, turnips, burdock, daikon radish) and winter squashes but incorporate baby greens, kale, collards, sprouts, dandelion greens, mustard greens, arugula, watercress, chives, celery, tofu, eggs, shiitake mushrooms, cucumbers, sesame seeds, beans of all kinds, garlic, lemons, fennel, rice, barley, buckwheat, almonds, oranges, apples, pears, pork, quail, fish.

Avoid:

chili peppers, coffee, dairy products, excess alcohol and sugar, large meals, shellfish.

Red Lentil squash soup

- ½ squash, cubed (kabocha squash is especially good)
- 1 cup red lentils, washed
- 6 cups water
- 1 teaspoon light sesame oil
- ½ onion, diced
- 3" piece of kombu
- sea salt to taste
- fresh parsley, chopped

Bring water with kombu to boil; sauté onion for 3-4 minutes. Add onion, squash and lentils to water; simmer for 45 minutes, until squash is soft; break squash up with the side of a wooden spoon. Season with salt. Garnish with parsley.

Chicken Egg Drop Soup

- 6 cups chicken stock
- chicken breast
- 3 eggs, room temperature, beaten
- 5 dried shiitake mushrooms, reconstituted and thinly sliced
- large handful of baby greens (arugula, kale, izuna, watercress, dandelion greens)
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced

Bring stock to boil; simmer chicken breast for approximately 10 minutes until cooked; remove from stock. Add mushrooms to stock and simmer for 5 minutes. Slowly pour in beaten eggs while whisking the stock with a fork for about 1 minute, until threads of egg form. Add shredded chicken and greens; turn off heat. Garnish with scallion.

Many thanks to Liu Ming's "Nourishing Within" classes (www.dayuancircle.com) from which this information was derived.