

EARLY SUMMER RECOMMENDATIONS

Nature is now maturing

and expanding, although the yang is not yet at its peak. The sun is shining brightly, and with its warmth, life is moving forward — growing, prospering, and providing abundance, opportunity, and plentiful energy for us to use.

The relatively **hot qi of early summer**

allows the fluids in our bodies to move freely; these same fluids protect us from the heat of the new season. To harmonize with this seasonal energy, we too should move and grow — but take care to avoid extremes of physical, mental, or emotional over-activity, which can injure our precious fluids. If we don't mobilize our energy sufficiently, we run the risk of stagnation; if we engage in excessive activity, we become dehydrated, and heat can penetrate internally and cause illness in later seasons. To maintain health at this time of year, and to avoid colds and flus in the fall and winter, consider these recommendations:

- **Contain emotion:** continue to experience your feelings, but keep a cool head; avoid excessive anger, outbursts, or being overly emotional, all of which can damage the heart system which is vulnerable during summer
- **Act now!** This is a time for movement, not a time for planning, thinking, and self-reflection — just get up and go; fulfill commitments and promises
 - **Be cautious:** the young yang energy of early summer can be aggressive and uncontained, so avoid accidents and injuries
 - **Be active:** exercise in the dew of the morning; engage in multiple activities, but avoid extremes, exhaustion, and aggression
 - **Focus:** don't generalize, be specific; start to bring springtime projects to completion; work closely with others; be part of something larger than yourself

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.





FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECIPES

Amy Lee, L.Ac.

Acupuncture and
Chinese Herbal Medicine

2320 Woolsey Street
Suite 100
Berekeley, CA 94705
510 486 1988

In early summer,

spring vegetables are still the mainstay as other foods start to become more abundant and varied. Cook quick, light meals, emphasizing stir-frying and steaming. Savory, salty, and sour soups are excellent at this time of year. Eat smaller meals, chew your food well, don't skip breakfast, and eat a light supper. The heavy, rich foods of winter are no longer appropriate; instead, eat more vegetarian meals and plenty of fish.

Foods to emphasize: barley, small lettuces, agar, radishes, seaweed, almonds, carrots, buckwheat, rice,

beans, lettuce, dark greens, green herbs, fresh ginger and garlic, chives, tomatoes, dandelion greens, mustard greens, celery, cabbage, radish, scallions, peas, almonds, lemon, cherries, strawberries, cucumbers, tofu, miso, eggs, game hens, quail, fresh fish, pork, chicken, green tea, vinegar

Avoid: chili peppers, greasy foods, coffee, sushi, shellfish, large meals

Miso soup with tofu, watercress and shiitake mushrooms

- 4 tablespoons fresh miso paste or more, to taste (white, red, or brown miso are fine)
- 1/4 block tofu, cut into small cubes
- 5-6 dried shiitake, rehydrated
- 1/2 bunch watercress or other greens
- generous splash of sake
- garnish: thinly sliced green onions

Bring 1 quart of water to boil; add shiitake and simmer 5-10 minutes. Add sake and let the alcohol boil off. Add watercress and tofu and boil for a few minutes more. Mix miso with a little warm water until it's a smooth paste; add miso mixture to rest of soup. Add lemon juice to finish. (It's important not to boil the soup once the miso paste has been added, or the beneficial enzymes will be destroyed.)

Variations:

- Miso soup with fresh fish instead of tofu: cut fish in small pieces; add a few minutes before turning heat off. Use ginger juice (from grated ginger) instead of lemon juice
- Add wakame or nori seaweed to soup
- Add cooked bean thread noodles or buckwheat (soba) noodles to the soup at the end for a complete meal
- Add a variety of vegetables to the boiling water at the beginning of cooking: sliced cabbage, daikon, broccoli, celery, fresh corn
- Consistent with the active energy of early summer, be spontaneous! Create your own miso soup variation with whatever stimulates your appetite

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(www.dayuancircle.com) from which this information was derived.*