



# Getting the Point

**Stamford Brook Acupuncture**

**Summer 2006**



**Summertime!** The blissful season of sunshine, long days, and holidays. This is Nature's most exuberant season - a time to play, relax, and enjoy all good things.

The theory of Chinese medicine says summer is the time of the Fire element. Its associated organ is the Heart. It is through our Heart energy, sometimes called the "Shen", our spirit or mind, that we radiate our selves into the world around us. This radiance is seen in the eyes, the complexion, and the gestures of the hands. When our Heart energy and Shen are healthy and balanced, we are alive and vibrant..

## ENJOY SUMMER SAFELY

**Summertime** .... and the living is easy. The time we've looked forward to for so long has arrived at last – long days and warm weather. In Chinese terms, it's the time of Yang. We wear fewer, brighter clothes, eat lighter food, and seem to

have more energy and be more outgoing. To make the most of the summer, we still need to remember the basic underlying principle of balance in Chinese medicine. When we don't know when the next sunny day will be, it's tempting to stay out in the sun for hours. Don't do it! Even in this country, excessive exposure to sun can lead to dehydration, sunburn and even sunstroke. Skin cancer is also a possibility. You can compromise by being outdoors in the warmth, but staying in the shade during the hottest hours.

In hot weather we all enjoy ice creams, lollies and cold drinks. There is an increasing trend to put more ice in cold drinks. A lot of cold puts a strain on our digestive systems, which need heat, not cold, to process our food. Try cool, rather than cold drinks - you get more taste, too! Read the article on **cool summer drinks** for some suggestions on how to support the digestive system and stay cool at the same time.

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Damp is a major cause of imbalance in Chinese terms. A hot dry summer still has plenty of opportunities for Damp to penetrate – it's easy not to dry thoroughly after a bath or shower when it's warm. It's also easy to stay in a wet bathing costume. Read the article on **aches and pains** to find out how you can end up with some seriously painful conditions if you don't take some basic precautions.

Summer is also a real opportunity to think ahead and have some preventative acupuncture treatments to improve our health for the winter. If you suffer from frequent colds and flu, read the article on **seasonal treatment for building immunity**.



### COOL SUMMER DRINKS

**LASSI** Mix plain yoghurt with 3 times the quantity of water. Add a few drops of rose essence and honey. Beat up with a whisk or fork or in a blender.

**SMOOTHIES** Mix plain yoghurt with an equal quantity of water and the same amount of soft fruit – strawberries, raspberries, bananas – everything is in season, so experiment with whatever takes your fancy!

**SUMMER COOLER** This is a cooling, refreshing tea, perfect for a hot summer's day. It is also helpful during feverish illnesses. Take 1 teaspoon peppermint, 2 teaspoons rosehip, 1 tablespoon concentrated apple juice, 1 pint water, lemon juice to taste. Pour boiling water over the herbs and brew for 5 minutes. Pour in the concentrated apple juice just

before serving and add lemon juice to taste.



### AVOID ACHES AND PAINS

At some time or another in life, pain, stiffness, soreness, or numbness of the muscles or joints will affect most of us.

Known as "painful obstruction syndrome" in Chinese medicine, the pain is caused by blockage of Qi (energy) and/or Blood resulting in the muscles becoming stiff and tense.

Such a blockage can come about in many ways. A perennial example is wrist pain due to constant use of the computer "mouse".

A particular hazard of summer weather is "invasion" of wind, cold or damp. A common example of this is the stiff neck we might get after sleeping under a fan. Wearing short tops with a gap around the waist area at the back, can leave the lower back particularly vulnerable, and not drying properly after swimming and then sitting around in a wet swimsuit makes the body even more vulnerable to an "invasion".

The surge of energy many of us feel in summer may encourage us to take more exercise. Strenuous exercise like running and tennis can put strain on the spine and other muscles and joints. If we are not used to exercise and don't build up gradually, we can end up with backache and strains.

People often find they have suddenly started to get pain in an area that was injured years ago but has not given much trouble before. Such injuries cause local

stagnation of Blood and Qi, which can be permanent. This underlying problem means that these areas are more susceptible than others to invasion of cold, damp or wind.

**Cold** invasion results in very severe joint or muscle pain with limitation of movement, usually affecting one area only. It is worse in the morning, gets better as the day goes on and a hot bath or hot water bottle will ease it considerably - hot weather will also improve the condition.



**Damp** in joints or muscles causes a dull pain, soreness and swelling and limitation of movement often with a feeling of heaviness and numbness in the limbs and will be worse in damp weather.

**Wind** invasion causes pain that is not fixed in one place but moves around the body from joint to joint.

Acupuncture treatment for this type of ache and pain is usually very successful if treatment is sought immediately, and can seem almost magical, giving immediate and dramatic improvement. When one of the above conditions goes untreated for a long time, it becomes harder to treat and may also turn into a **hot** condition. This is characterised by severe pain, a feeling of heat and redness of the joint and limitation of movement.

Are you prone to catching colds throughout the year? Did you have flu last winter? Would you like to improve your resistance to these ailments?

## BUILD YOUR IMMUNITY WITH SEASONAL TREATMENT

It may seem odd to be thinking of colds and flu when we are in the midst of summer. Yet, in Chinese medicine, late summer is best time for preventative treatment!

Such treatment is designed to build the body's resistance to pathogens, or to strengthen the immune system. This treatment is intensive – you should expect to have between one to three treatments a week for a month. The best time to have these treatments is in the months of August and September.

So, if you would like to avoid suffering from the discomfort and inconvenience of colds and flu next winter, consider booking a series of appointments with your local acupuncturist. It is an important investment in your wellbeing next winter.

To wait for the illness to develop  
before remedying it  
For the disorder to form  
before taking care of it  
Is to wait until one is thirsty  
before digging the well  
To wait for the battle  
before forging the weapons  
Is this not too late? Su Wen

## THE MISERY OF HAYFEVER

Hayfever makes summer a misery for many people. In Chinese medicine, hayfever is seen as being due to a combination of weak defensive Qi and a history of frequent colds. Hayfever often starts in early childhood, but it may start in later life as the Kidney energy (which is partly responsible for our defensive Qi) declines. In later life the situation is often complicated by mucus production, which

has its roots in digestive energy weakened by a working lifestyle - too much fatty, sugary food eaten in a rush to meet a deadline!

Treatment with acupuncture will address the distressing symptoms of sneezing, nasal discharge, cough, headache, etc. This may give some immediate relief, but it is essential to have further treatment once the pollen season is over to treat the root of the hayfever and build up the defensive Qi. If you are unlucky enough to react to dust, fur and other allergens all year round, acupuncture will be used to simultaneously address the symptoms and the root cause.



### MORE ON INFERTILITY

Since writing the article on infertility that appeared in the Spring issue of this newsletter, we have learned more about the issue that may be helpful to couples trying to conceive.

Oocytes, the immature eggs, take three months to develop. Couples who make lifestyle changes (such as diet, having acupuncture, changing work patterns, etc) should allow a three-month period for these changes to take effect on the quality of developing ova. Sperm count and mobility can also be improved during this three-month period, so it will be helpful if male partners make the lifestyle changes as well (including having acupuncture treatment!).

By allowing this time to let the changes take place, couples can take off some of the pressure of trying to conceive while increasing their chances of achieving a natural conception, or improving the success rate of assisted conception. In

addition, good pre-conception care will help to reduce the risk of miscarriage, and help to ensure the delivery of a healthy baby.



### ACUPUNCTURE A SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT FOR MIGRAINE

A research study found that women receiving weekly acupuncture had fewer migraines than those taking the drug flunarizine, a standard treatment for migraine. The women receiving acupuncture also needed less painkilling medication, and experienced fewer side effects. The authors of the study concluded that acupuncture is an adequate preventative treatment that is at least as effective as a standard medication, and is better tolerated.

The study was reviewed favourably by the British Medical Journal. Details about this study, and an easy-to-understand evaluation, can be accessed at:

[www.nelh.nhs.uk/hth/acupuncture\\_migraine.asp](http://www.nelh.nhs.uk/hth/acupuncture_migraine.asp)



### YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

***I dread the summer because I get such terrible hay fever. Could acupuncture help at all?***

Yes, it can help relieve the immediate symptoms, and also deal with the underlying causes. A practitioner will also discuss your lifestyle and diet with you, to see if any changes could help alleviate your hay fever.

***I thought people got colds mainly in the winter, but I seem to get as many in the summer.***

Even in high summer, temperatures can vary a lot, even within a single day. More buildings are air conditioned, which of course also lead to sudden temperature changes. We're less well protected because we're only wearing light clothes. Try to carry at least a light jacket or cardigan, even on the hottest days. Acupuncture can strengthen your system generally, to reduce the number of colds you get.



***I love being outdoors in summer, having picnics and swimming. I thought all the warmth would help my aching bones, but sometimes they feel even worse.***

The warmth does help, but there's nearly always some damp around as well, even on a hot dry day.– take a rug or preferably a waterproof sheet, to sit on for your picnics and relaxation.

***It's great that I feel more energetic in the summer, but I wonder why, as I usually eat less.***

All the Earth's energy comes ultimately from the sun, which is at its highest and hottest in the summer. It's the time of greatest Yang, and affects every living thing. Before the relatively recent introduction of electric light, most people's lives were governed by the length of the day.

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY Maggie Bavington, Liz Cook, Beverley de Valois and Nancy Passmore.** We are a group of practitioners who trained together at the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine. We are all members of the British Acupuncture Council. We practice both the Five Element and Traditional Chinese Medicine styles of acupuncture. We are all committed to ongoing supervision and training and sharing insights from our particular specialities in the interest of better care for our patients. These currently include women's health, fertility, pain relief, musculo-skeletal conditions, addiction and detox and acupuncture research.

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