

TCM: Fit for summer

C6 Life

HEALTH

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What's your weight-loss plan this summer? Want a flat belly, firm thighs and butt so you'll be swimsuit-ready? Be careful: dieting or over-exercising can easily lead to depression, saggy skin, hair loss and bad breath.

In traditional Chinese medicine, good health happens when the internal systems act in harmony. TCM regards extra weight as turbid dampness and phlegm, considering them to be pathological products of organ dysfunction or an abnormal metabolism. Its physicians focus on the whole body and always consider guidelines when choosing treatment for excess weight.

Obese individuals often consume too much grease. They may have trouble with their digestion, leading to retention of food. This causes symptoms such as abdominal distention, foul breath and a greasy coating on the tongue.

Treatments containing hawthorn, malt and radish seed are used to promote the secretion of digestive fluids which help to break down fatty materials.

The excess phlegm associated with obesity leads to shortness of breath, chest congestion and dizziness. Individuals may also suffer from irritability, high blood pressure, headaches and insomnia. Tangerine

peel, pinellia tuber and white mustard seed can be used to help resolve the phlegm.

Obesity may involve a faulty fluid metabolism. Symptoms can include puffiness, scanty urine and fatigue. Inducing diuresis (increased excretion of urine) is a direct way to aid the elimination of excessive dampness. Wax-gourd peel, Indian bread and plantain seed are commonly used to rid the body of dampness.

The obese body stores too much turbid waste and fatty tissue. The large intestine is usually under-functioning and constipation can add to the problem. Promoting regular bowel movements reinforces excretion and eliminates body waste. Chinese rhubarb, giant knotweed rhizome and fleecflower root promote bowel movement.

High levels of lipids that lead to sclerosis of the blood vessels are regarded as exhibiting blood stasis in TCM. Methods of activating the blood not only promote flow and decelerate the sclerosis, they also prevent further accumulation of fatty tissue. Angelica root, Sichuan lovage, red sage root, red peony root and notoginseng are used for this.

TCM believes the liver system plays

an important role in *chi* circulation, as well as the enhancement of food digestion and blood flow. Proper functioning of the liver and the gall bladder assists the breakdown of fat. Capillary wormwood herb, bupleurum root and cassia seed are used to help the processes. This type of treatment is also effective for individuals who suffer from gallstones and a fatty liver.

The elderly or those who often go on weight-loss regimens tend to develop paleness, abnormal sweating, loose muscles, hair loss, limb coldness and

lacklustre skin. TCM believes these signs can be eased by invigorating the spleen and kidney. Herbs used include processed rhemannia rhizome, astragalus root and Chinese yam.

A holistic approach to weight loss can achieve long-term and healthy weight maintenance.

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