

HERB STOP

August 2010 Highlight



How Is Your Heart?

The human heart is a most wondrous organ, beating 100,000 times every day and pumping 3000 gallons of blood each day. The heart works closely with the lungs to gain oxygen and with the digestive system to obtain nutrients from our food. We can say that the heart is the giver of life. Even though many great discoveries have been made about the heart, and many lives have been saved through the hands of skillful surgeons, heart disease is still the leading cause of deaths in the western world. Why? I believe that it is the way we live today, we are not human beings anymore, we are human doings. Our fast paced life promotes stress, pressure, depression and insomnia. We are unable to take time to enjoy the silence, calmly eat our meals, healthy homemade ones at that, or get enough rest, and smell the flowers on our way through life. The foods we eat are nutritionally devitalized, high in fats and cholesterol, especially red meat, sugar, caffeine and alcohol. Lack of exercise or overly strenuous exercises affects the cardiovascular system. These are but a few things that “troubles” the heart and makes it susceptible to elevated cholesterol, atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, and eventually to stroke or heart attack. Scientists keep searching for ways of improving the health of the heart with drugs and surgery, but I believe that the best kept secret for a healthy heart can be found in wholesome food, herbs, exercise, enough rest, and above all joy and love, loving yourself and others.

A Look At Your Heart

A healthy heart expresses joy, laughter, compassion, love, and the ability to see and speak clearly. The condition of the heart can be read from the color of a person’s complexion and the color under the fingernails, red, pink, blue, or white. A person with a healthy heart has a moist and pink tongue. Traditional Chinese Medicine states that the heart controls the spirit, the part of us that fights for what we believe in. Here in the West the heart has long been associated with courage. Phrases that describe a person with a strong spirit (or heart) “She has the heart of a lion” or “He showed real heart”. On the other hand, a “Weak-hearted” or “The faint of heart” suggests a weak spirit or a fearful person. The heart is also considered the place of truth. When someone speaks honestly and sincerely we use the phrase “He spoke from his heart”. The heart controls the tongue and speech. How do you express yourself? Speech problems, such as stuttering or poor enunciation, are heart related, perhaps by weak heart chi. Other expressions, such as: an open heart, a cruel heart, a tender heart, I feel it in my heart, my heart is heavy, I love you with all my heart, describes some deep truth about a human expression.

Summer Is The Heart’s Season

Summer is the season when the heart enjoys an increase in energy (chi) and during the hours of 11 am to 1 pm. During these months and hours the increased energy the heart receives can bring about greater healing, if appropriate measures are taken, or it can cause manifestations of underlying causes. Therefore, the summer months and hours are the most ideal times to rejuvenate your fire element, the heart and circulation. To balance the heat of the summer, fresh water filled and cooling foods are now available. The berries, melons, peaches, apricots, plums and cherries, squashes, tomatoes, artichokes and eggplants, are now ready to be picked to keep us cool, hydrated, nourished and light. Other specific foods to strengthen the heart are rice, wheat, oats, adzuki beans, mung beans and lentils. Bitter foods and herbs too strengthen the heart; therefore include those in your daily meals, arugula, watercress, mustard greens, dandelions, and any other salad greens you can find. Foods that stress the heart are alcohol, sugar, honey, coffee, chocolate and ice cream. Ice cream is too rich and heats up the blood.

The Heart Loves The Red Color

The color red is associated with the heart. If you are drawn to the color red or perhaps you dislike this color, it may indicate an imbalance in the heart and circulatory system. The color red energizes, has a warming effect, promotes circulation, stimulates adrenalin, red blood cell production, and strengthens willpower and courage. Include the red color if you experience anemia, infertility, colds and chills. Avoid red if you have a fever or nervous disorder.

Fear – Stress

Science has proven how closely our emotions are connected to our health. Fear or stress (another word for fear) changes the heart rate and respiration, elevates cholesterol level, and creates hormonal imbalances. Fear or stress causes heart disease; therefore it is essential to limit stress or fear, either by getting away from stressful situations, or acting more courageously, or both. At the same time include joy, laughter and spontaneity to strengthen the heart and invoke a state of inner tranquility. “Take heart”, “Follow your heart”, and do what you love to do. For stress and fear the **Crisis Formula** may be helpful for those who are going through difficult times. It takes the edge off! **Crisis Formula** does not make you feel drowsy, sleepy or indifferent. In the contrary, it gives strength and courage.

Blood Pressure

Heart rhythm and heart rate are determined by the breathing, as well as the mental and emotional state of a person. With each heart beat, blood is being pumped from the heart to the rest of the body through blood vessels. Blood pressure is caused by the expansion and contraction of the heart. A normal blood pressure is 120 over 80. Blood pressure readings are shown in two numbers. The diastolic phase (the top number) occurs when the heart relaxes and opens, allowing blood to flow into the chambers. The systolic phase occurs when the heart contracts, causing blood to be pumped into the arterial system and throughout the body. Excellent herbs known to maintain healthy blood pressure levels are **Hawthorn, Garlic, Motherwort, Heart Calm and Circulatory Calmness**.

Cholesterol

The two cholesterols we hear about, LDL (low-density lipoprotein) and HDL (high-density lipoprotein) are not cholesterol, but proteins that carry cholesterol to different places in the body. LDL brings cholesterol to the walls of arteries, where it forms cholesterol plaque. HDL brings cholesterol into the large intestines and out of the body. HDL, the good cholesterol reduces the amount of cholesterol in the body. **C-Free Flow** is an herbal extract traditionally known to clear cholesterol out of the body and to ease stress. **Artery Clear** is another formula known to reduce cholesterol.

Burned Food

Do you often burn your food? Or, do you like blackened foods? In Chinese medicine it says that burnt food increases the fire element. Are you perhaps lacking this element?

Herbs For A Healthy Heart

The following herbs can be taken in the form of capsules, teas or extracts. Cayenne, Dandelion and Garlic are considered foods, and can simply be added to meals. Hawthorn can be made into a yummy jam, made in a similar way as rosehip jam.

Hawthorn is the most important heart herb in herbal medicine, both for preventing heart problems and for treating heart diseases. Hawthorn has the ability to either gently stimulate or depress the heart's activity. This heart tonic has a strengthening effect by bringing micronutrients to the heart muscle.

Borage flowers or leaves strengthen the heart, especially the emotional heart, bringing happiness.

Cayenne is well known to improve blood circulation and to strengthen the heart, arteries, capillaries and nerves. Good to use when the fire element is weak.

Dandelion contains high levels of potassium, useful when the heart is weak and fails to circulate the blood efficiently through the kidneys (water retention).

Garlic is known to reduce cholesterol and hypertension along with preventing the excessive clumping together of blood platelets.

Hibiscus has a cooling effect, lowers the systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and reduces cholesterol.

Jujube nourishes heart yin, tonifies liver blood, quiets the spirit, good for irritability, insomnia, palpitations, anxiety.

Linden may be helpful for nervous tension, stress and insomnia, because of its relaxing properties. Linden may prevent the development of arteriosclerosis and hypertension when associated with nervous condition.

Motherwort is known to nourish and strengthen the heart muscle. For people who feel overwhelmed by too many activities. Culpepper says, “...it is calming to the trembling heart...dispelling of melancholic vapors from the heart.”

Rose is relaxing, uplifting and soothing. It has been used for anger, shock, grief, jealousy, anxiety, nervous tension, depression, melancholy, sadness and emotional transitions. I once knew a man who completely overcame a heart disease in a very short time by simply applying pure rose essential oil on his chest on a daily basis.

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