

HERB STOP

October 2010 Highlight



How Are Your Lungs?

The lungs are the main organs of respiration. Their responsibility is to supply the body with oxygen. The lungs also eliminate carbon dioxide waste. There are two lungs, one on each side of the thorax, stretching from the bottom rib to just below the collar bone. When we are born, the color of the lungs is pink, but by the time we become adults they turn into a grey color. A smoker, or a person exposed to highly polluted air, their lungs often turn black. Needless to say, deep breathing and good air are needed to keep our lungs strong and healthy, but it is also needed to fuel the body with oxygen. Why do we need oxygen? The short answer is energy. Erroneously, we think of food as energy, but food would be useless as fuel without oxygen. It would be inert. Oxygen brings it to life; it makes the energy derived from food reactive and life-sustaining. We can live days or weeks without food, but only few minutes without breathing. Next time you feel tired, instead of reaching for something sweet, take a few deep breaths and notice an increase in your energy level as well as your mood. Oxygen is energy, and energy is life. We also need to breathe to keep a normal body temperature of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. It is the lungs as well as the digestive system (carbohydrates) that provide the raw materials of combustion, which produces energy and heat.

Breathing In The Life Force – The Breath Of Life

According to Oriental tradition, the breath is the vehicle of prana, chi, vital life-force, cosmic or heavenly energy. When we breathe we are not only inhaling oxygen, we are also taking in particles that are held in suspension in the air, which are needed to build a healthy body and mind. How we breathe in this life force, whether it is shallow or deep, hurried or slow, controls and influences our body and mind. For example, people who are shallow breather tend to be more nervous and emotional, while those who breathe deeply and rhythmically tend to be more emotionally balanced, centered and less affected by changes in their environment. Breathing is both an involuntary and a voluntary action. If you are breathing unconsciously, the state of your mind will control your breathing, which reinforces your current attitudes and belief system. But, if you become skilled at controlling your breath by making it deeper and more rhythmic, the opposite effect takes place: this deeper rhythm and greater abundance of life force reshapes your attitudes and strengthens your health. Thus the breath is a link to the involuntary systems and the deeper recesses of your nature. There are many books available on the various breathing techniques to influence body and mind. For example, breathing in through the left nostril only, slows down metabolism, and therefore may affect weightloss.

Autumn Is The Lung's Season

Autumn is the season (from September 21st to December 21st) when the lungs enjoy an increase in energy (chi) and during the hours of 3 am to 5 am. During these months and hours the increased energy the lungs receive can bring about greater healing, if appropriate measures are taken, or it can cause manifestations of underlying causes. Therefore, the autumn months and hours are the most ideal times to rejuvenate the lungs. The best foods to strengthen the lungs are rice, barley, oats and wheat. Pungent foods and spices, such as mustard greens, turnip greens, cardamom, cinnamon, oregano, onion, garlic, ginger, horseradish, watercress and radishes, have the strongest effect at stimulating the lung, and clearing the breathing passages. Other foods that support the lungs are cooked green leafy vegetables, beets, carrots, winter squash, yams, sweet potato, cauliflower, broccoli, kidney and garbanzo beans, halibut, cod, flounder, avocado, grapes, pomegranate, persimmons, pineapples, lemon, grapefruit, tangerine and pear. Herbs that support the lungs, as well as increase oxygen in the body are: coltsfoot, blessed thistle, thyme, and horehound. Foods that put stress on the lungs during autumn are mainly milk products. They tend to increase mucus in the body, overloading the lungs.

Worry - Sadness - Grief

Science has proven how closely our emotions are connected to our health. The lungs are associated with worry, grief and/or sadness. Someone who holds on to these emotions can often suffer from lung imbalances. This holding on can further weaken the lungs. On the other hand, someone with weak lungs may have a tendency to experience sadness and grief.

Herbs For Healthy Lungs

- ⊗ Eucalyptus is widely known to alleviate respiratory ailments. Aromatherapists say that inhaling pure, unadulterated eucalyptus essential oil may have a tonifying, expectorant, antiseptic and anti-infectious effect on the whole respiratory system. It opens sinuses and breathing passages relieving symptoms of bronchitis, asthma, and chest congestion. When my children were little I would place one drop of eucalyptus essential oil on each side of their pillow at bedtime to help them breathe freely throughout the night.
- ⊗ Mullein leaf, flower and root have a strengthening effect on the respiratory system as well as the digestive system. According to the Chinese healing system, lung problems appear when the colon is too congested. This congestion spills over to the lungs for elimination. Herbalist have long used mullein leaf as a soothing expectorant for irritations in the lungs, asthma, pleurisy, etc., the flower for ear pain, and the root for various colon conditions, such as colitis, polyps, etc. By using the whole plant, leaf, flower and root, mullein has traditionally been known to cleanse and strengthen the lungs, allowing more oxygen supply and assimilation in the blood system, as well as increasing nutrient assimilation with a cleansing action on the bowel. Hence, I would call this combination a life tonic, as it increases life force vitality.
- ⊗ Lung Clear is an herbal combination of thyme and fenugreek, traditionally known as a powerful expectorant for coughs and colds, and a strengthener for the lungs. It softens and dissolves hardened masses of accumulated mucus, for those who use, or have used, large quantities of milk, cheese and butter, as they cause a great amount of accumulated mucus waste in the system, restraining oxygen intake and the vital life-force. Lung Clear is known to loosen and expel mucus and phlegm accumulated in the bronchial tubes, as well as soothing the mucous membranes in the lungs and gastrointestinal tract.
- ⊗ Cough Oil has been prepared especially for people who are unable to take herbal remedies internally, such as children, people with impaired digestion, etc. Cough oil can be massaged into the chest area to relieve coughs, congestion and inflammation in the lungs.

More Information To Keep Your Lungs Healthy

- ⊗ Keep warm; lungs do not like cold weather.
- ⊗ Breathe through your nose to filter and warm the air going into the lungs.
- ⊗ Eat pineapples for a few days to strengthen the lungs. Incomplete digestion along with free radicals can clog the lungs, and they lose their elasticity, making breathing more difficult.
- ⊗ Playing the harmonica or flute is uplifting and can build up the lungs.
- ⊗ Diffuse essential oils in your home or work area, such as spruce, pine, hyssop and eucalyptus. Essential oils are uplifting, have anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties.
- ⊗ Perfumes are made from chemicals. Breathing in these chemicals all day long can weaken the lungs. Also, consider the effect these perfumes have on the environment and people. Instead, create your own perfume, specifically designed for your own personality and well-being, with pure undulated essential oils.
- ⊗ Spending a few minutes everyday on a Slant board can help empty the lungs of mucus, due to the gravitational pull.
- ⊗ The color white has an affinity with the lungs (white foods, white clothing, etc.). If you are drawn to this color or may have a distaste for it, may indicate an imbalance in the lungs.
- ⊗ Vegetable barley soup is excellent to make during crisp autumn season. Soak barley and then simmer on low heat with root vegetables such as carrot, burdock, turnip, onion and garlic. When tender add some greens, such as celery, comfrey, dandelion, kale, parsley or spinach. Don't cook these greens; just let them steep for 5-10 minutes. Add some spices such as garlic, onion, thyme, Italian Seasoning, Herbes de Provence, Garam Masala, Southwest Mix, Curry, Mexican Seasoning and Sambhar.
- ⊗ Eat less fruits during autumn, except those in season, such as apples, pears, persimmons, etc.

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