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Natural help for digestion and weight-loss

Many of my clients ask me if there's anything in Chinese Medicine for weight loss: "Is there a magic acupuncture point to make me skinny?!" I wish there was – I'd be a billionaire! Unfortunately there are no quick fixes in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). I like to think of it more like gardening – building up the soil, watering, and pulling out the weeds to produce resilient, healthy plants that can naturally resist disease.

That said, acupuncture and Chinese herbs can work wonders in balancing the system – both physically and emotionally. When our body and mind are functioning well, we feel more happy, relaxed and energetic, more likely to make healthy diet and lifestyle choices. We gradually come back to our optimal weight, without having to force ourselves into strict diets or exercise regimes. This shift happens naturally, and the effects are long-term and lasting.

On a physical level, TCM can strengthen and balance the digestion. With a strong digestive system, we can extract the maximum nutrition from our food, and we feel satisfied – less likely to overeat, or indulge in junk food or binge eating. As well, we don't experience the heaviness, bloating, gas, and discomfort that are indicative of weakness in the digestion – not enough fire to break food down completely. With acupuncture and herbs, our system can become more like a clean-burning stove, where little unburned fuel remains.

The mind and body are intricately connected. When the physical digestion is strong, so is the emotional, and vice-versa. Experiences are digested into wisdom and nourishment, while food is digested into physical nutrition. When we are overwhelmed, worried and anxious, poor physical digestion almost always follows. We just can't assimilate anything else, physically or emotionally. As well, eating when anxious, angry or stressed can wreck havoc on the digestive system.

Overeating and food addiction is generally a sign of imbalance in the body and mind. Commonly, it is used to dull anxiety or other emotions, or to compensate for stagnation or weakness in the system. As well as acupuncture and herbs to improve the digestion, I will often perform ear acupuncture for addictions, a combination of points to strengthen will-power, improve our ability to let go of old patterns and habits, as well as points for calming and centering. When the body and mind are balanced and calm, compulsive behaviours fall away.

Many clients have reported that after a few treatments, they feel clearer and lighter, with an overall sense of well-being. The body and mind shifts toward centre, and the pounds begin to fall away, almost as a side-effect. "For the first time in my life, food is no longer an addiction – it has always been the only way I knew of to deal with my emotions," one client reported recently. "I had my usual bag of chips in front of me, and I just didn't want any! I went for a walk instead!"

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