

## **TCM in Women's Healthcare :- Improving Menopausal Health with TCM**

As life expectancy increases, up to half of a woman's life may be spent in the postmenopausal period. The proportion of women in this age group in the population is increasing. Menopausal women experience this transition period when their reproductive function is declining.

Improving menopausal health can help women navigate these "troubled times" smoothly. It not only helps with the physical and mental wellbeing of menopausal women, it can prevent a variety of metabolic diseases in old age. Although menopausal women are no longer fertile, there is still a need for sex. However, they are susceptible to sexual dysfunction. Timely interventions can help overcome sexual dysfunction, and enable menopausal women to maintain a harmonious sexual life. This is conducive to health and improves the quality of life in old age.

Menopausal health care includes (1) prevention and treatment of common diseases and gynaecological cancers, (2) the promotion of knowledge regarding menopausal self-care and monitoring, and (3) sexual health. Women have to take note of the following areas:

### **1. Work-life balance**

During menopause, a woman's kidney *qi* gradually declines and she is easily fatigued. She should not overwork, as it may cause organ *qi* and blood dysfunctions, which can lead to menstrual disorders and cancer. She should participate in appropriate physical activities, engage in strengthening exercises, enhance her fitness, and adjust her daily routines to ensure adequate sleep and rest.

### **2. Emotional ease.**

Although menopause is a time when genealogical tumours tend to occur, it is possible for women to avoid psychological stress, and adverse stimuli. This helps to achieve a mental state of peace that is conducive to health and longevity.

### **3. Gynaecological screening**

Since women are susceptible to cancers during menopause, they should go for regular gynaecological screening for early detection of cancer. They should not ignore any symptoms of unknown causes. Instead, further examinations should be carried out.

**4. Attention to warmth and coldness.** It is important to pay attention to changes in the climate. Avoid getting drenched in rain. Keep a regular diet and practise good eating habits. Avoid eating spicy food to strengthen the *yang*, but also avoid overly cold food that may lead to diarrhoea. Maintain good bowel movements. Consume more soy (for phytoestrogens), and shrimp (for calcium), if possible.

Here are some TCM food therapy porridges:

- *Shenling* spleen porridge: to improve frailness and fatigue, loss of appetite, loose stools, chronic diarrhoea, coughing, and increased vaginal discharge.
- Ham and cucumber porridge: for post-operation frailness, lack of strength, backache and vaginal discharge.
- Red dates porridge: for heart and spleen weakness, dizziness, lack of strength, insomnia, forgetfulness, palpitations, and shortness of breath.
- Walnut and black sesame porridge: for dizziness, vision loss, premature white hair, sore back and knees, and constipation.
- Wolfberry porridge: for dizziness, tinnitus, sore back and knees, heart palpitations, insomnia, hair loss, white hair, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

**About the author**

**Ms Zhu Ping** is the Senior TCM physician of Hua Mei Acupuncture and TCM Centre. She graduated from Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SHUTCM) in 1984. Whilst in Shanghai, she was Associate Professor of Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, a member of the Chinese Doctors' Association and the China Institute in Integrative Medicine (CAIM). Ms Zhu is a registered TCM physician with the Singapore Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board. She specializes in management of gynaecological illnesses, chronic diseases and other ailments commonly encountered in Internal Medicine.