

# Chinese Medicine to Support Optimal Health

by Melissa Cohen  
Nutritional Therapist BSc (Hons), Mbant, mIFM, NLP Practitioner



You might have tried Chinese medicine without really thinking about it. I enjoy using the wisdom of Chinese medicine in my Practice.

With over three thousand years of practice Chinese

medicine continues to shape modern wellness, offering time-tested remedies that bridge ancient traditions with contemporary health.

This article discusses the 4 main modalities in Chinese medicine including:

1. Acupuncture and acupressure
2. Herbal therapy
3. Movement (tai chi and qi gong)
4. Nutrition

Chinese Medicine is all about balance and one of the main aims is to balance the effects of the body's "qi", known as the "vital force" or simply "energy". Any imbalance in this is maybe a cause for illness and disease. It's all about releasing just the right amount of energy, leaving you feeling a balance of Yin and Yang, a Chinese concept that describes how opposing forces are interconnected and complementary.

In Chinese medicine, your constitution plays a key role in determining which foods and herbs can help restore balance. Here's a guide to different constitution types and how to support them through diet and lifestyle:

## 1. Damp Constitution

**Symptoms:** Watery eyes, runny nose, oily skin, acne, sluggish digestion.

**Balance with:** Drying foods such as grains, legumes, and ginger tea.

**Reduce:** Dairy, fried foods, and excessive sugar.

## 2. Heat Constitution

**Symptoms:** Redness, rashes, irritability, insomnia, overheating.

**Balance with:** Cooling and neutral foods like raw vegetables, salads, and smoothies.

**Examples:** Neem (a herb from the neem tree, which may have some potential benefits, such as supporting dental health and hair care), cucumber, watermelon, peppermint.

**Reduce:** Spicy foods, alcohol, caffeine, and fried foods.

## 3. Dry Constitution

**Symptoms:** Dry skin, coughing, constipation, dehydration.

**Balance with:** Hydrating and nourishing foods like broths, stews, root vegetables, and flaxseeds.

**Increase:** Water, fruits, nut milk, soups, and omega-rich foods.

**Reduce:** Excessive green tea, processed foods, and dry crackers.

## 4. Cold Constitution

**Symptoms:** Cold hands and feet, sensitivity to cold, sluggish circulation.

**Balance with:** Warming foods and spices such as chilli, cinnamon, ginger, and black pepper.

**Reduce:** Raw foods, iced drinks, and excessive dairy.

## 5. Moisture Imbalance

**Symptoms:** bloating, sluggishness, and mucus buildup due to the body holding too much moisture

**Balance with:** Drying herbs like green tea, dandelion, and ginger.

**Reduce:** Excess damp-producing foods like dairy, wheat, and processed sugar.



You may have recognised yourself in a few. Usually there are 2 types of constitutions that are dominant.

Sometimes, we need a little extra support beyond nutrition to help speed up the healing process. Whether it's to boost energy, manage stress, or simply get through the day more effectively, the right herbs can make a real difference. With so much flu going around in the midst of winter, herbs might be just what you need.

Some of the most well-known Chinese herbs, now widely used in the Western world, include **panax ginseng**, **reishi**, **angelica root**, and **astragalus**. These powerful herbs have a range of benefits, from boosting energy and supporting immunity to enhancing overall vitality.

Panax ginseng is well-known for its ability to boost energy levels by enhancing oxygen delivery to the cells. Ginseng also has active plant components, known as ginsenosides, which help regulate the nervous system and reduce inflammation. Panax ginseng is commonly consumed as a tincture or in capsule form, with typical dosages ranging from 500mg to 1,500mg per day, depending on individual needs.

Reishi mushrooms are part of the medicinal mushroom family, with a longstanding history of promoting longevity. As with many plant medicines, reishi contains anti-inflammatory compounds, and research indicates its potential in delaying neurodegenerative diseases.

Furthermore, studies suggest reishi may help protect against illnesses like cancer by boosting the immune system. A fantastic alternative to coffee, reishi has a delightful taste and can be enjoyed with your favourite plant-based milk, added to smoothies, or taken in tincture or capsule form. Dosage typically ranges from 500mg to 1,500mg per day.

Angelica root is revered for its analgesic properties, helping to alleviate pain, act as a blood tonic, and lubricate the intestines. It's particularly beneficial for women experiencing irregular menstrual cycles or amenorrhea (absence of menstruation), offering natural support during such times.

Astragalus is a powerhouse herb frequently used to enhance immune function, particularly during the winter months, boosting resilience. While primarily used in Chinese medicine to treat kidney disease, western evidence is still developing. Nonetheless, studies suggest that astragalus may help reduce blood pressure and improve oxygenation by increasing haemoglobin levels.

It has also been found helpful in reducing side effects from medications, such as nausea and diarrhoea. This is usually available as a tincture or capsule with dosages ranging from 500mg to 1,500mg.

As with any herbal remedy, it's important to consult your GP or healthcare practitioner before starting a new supplement, especially if you're on medication. I've seen positive results using these herbs with clients who have Hashimoto's, helping to improve resilience and energy levels.

Acupressure mats are fantastic for any inflammatory disorders such as joint pain, headaches, menstrual pain, stress, anxiety or even

insomnia. These mats are covered with spiky points that stimulate the body's nerves to increase oxygenation, blood circulation and suggested to release endorphins. This helps to improve sleep, reduce anxiety and joint pain, it can be a real game changer. Start with 5 minutes and work up to 30 minutes, lying on your back and let the healing begin.

Chinese medicine takes a holistic approach to health, recognising that it's not just about herbs and nutrition, but also about how we move and regulate our energy. Qi Gong, an ancient practice, works on physical, mental, and spiritual levels.

The movements are slow and deliberate, designed to coordinate breath with movement, helping to nourish the soul and harmonise the body's energy flow.

Whereas Tai Chi, with its martial art foundations, focuses on developing physical strength and agility. Together, these practices complement one another beautifully.

Lastly, acupuncture is a key component of traditional Chinese medicine, where fine needles are strategically inserted into pressure points along meridian pathways in the body. These meridians are believed to facilitate the flow of energy, or "Qi," throughout the body. By stimulating these points, acupuncture helps to balance and release blocked energy, promoting healing and restoring harmony.

Acupuncture can be particularly effective for conditions like insomnia, headaches, and chronic pain. It is also widely used to support fertility, reduce inflammation, and alleviate stress.

Discover how Chinese medicine can support your health by understanding your unique constitution. I'm offering Thyroid UK members a personalised plan to help balance your vital energy. After completing a quick questionnaire, I'll send you a 5-day menu plan with delicious, tailored recipes designed to suit your unique constitution.

**This exclusive offer is available only for Thyroid UK members at a cost of £50, with a limited-time discount available until April 2025. Don't miss out on this opportunity to nourish your body with personalised nutrition!**

Let's take the first step toward your healthiest self - one meal at a time!

Email: [melissa@melissa-cohen.com](mailto:melissa@melissa-cohen.com)

Follow us on Instagram for tips, recipes, and wellness inspiration: [@melissacohen\\_nutrition](https://www.instagram.com/melissacohen_nutrition)