



# A Holistic Analysis of Indigestion

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A 60 year old Mrs. Chen came to the TCM clinic and spoke with concerns, “Doctor, I think I am too skinny. Although I eat a lot every day, every time I finish a meal, I had to visit the bathroom. It happens about four to five times a day.” She was about 150 cm tall, weighing less than 40 kg, and had a healthy appetite. Ever since childhood she would feel the need of defecation arising as soon as she ingest something; the frequency and quantity of her defecation remained high, and the qualities were soft and shapeless. The condition persisted for several decades and it had troubled her.

The diagnosis indicated that the cause of the long-term indigestion were congenital, or in the terms of TCM, the foundation of innate constitution. High frequency of defecation with shapeless stool showed that the nutrition in food were not absorbed, hence the loss of weight. I prescribed pinellia decoction to drain the epigastrium (Ban Xia Xie Xin



Tang), sweet dew drink (gan lu yin), poria (fu ling), and nutmeg (rou dou kou), and recommended her to change dietary habit: First, eat frequently at smaller portions, so the ingested food has time to be fully digested and absorbed; second, eat food with high quality protein and fat to prepare her stomach for digestion by facilitating the secretion of digestive juice. After a while, Mrs. Chen's defecation issue reduced in frequency



## Acupressure



### **Nei Guan :**

2 cun (3 fingers wide) above the wrist crease between the tendons of palmaris longus and flexor carpi radialis. Useful for eliminating bloating, relieve palpitation and insomnia.



### **He Gu :**

In the middle of the 2nd metacarpal bone on the radial side. Relieve nausea and facilitate digestion.



### **Zu San Li :**

3 cun below Xi Yen, one finger width lateral from the anterior border of the tibia. A vital pressure point in the preservation of stomach, can eliminate bloating and facilitate digestion.



and quantity, and gained weight as well.

Generally speaking, the cause of indigestion can be categorized as functional and structural (or organic). Approximately 80% of the patients fall into the category of functional indigestion, which is often associated with lifestyle and dietary habit, as well as nervousness, binge eating, irregular dietary pattern, lack in exercise, smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages. Organic indigestion is associated with digestive diseases like gastric ulcer, duodenal ulcer, and gastric cancer.

Aside from elderlies with declined digestive function, children under 6 years of age who are not fully developed and high-stress office workers are also at high risk of digestion. Among these high risk groups, the number of female patients exceeds male patients. A possible explanation to that is the high sensitivity of female to stress. People with long-term indigestion are usually slim and have difficulty gaining weight, since their body has been denied nutrition. Do not mistaken indigestion as a minor issue. As more and more food become congested in the gastrointestinal tract, more energy is required to digest, all the while toxins and wastes are building up and inflicting harm on the body. Those with mild symptoms may experience shortness of breath, bloating, and acid reflux, while the severe symptoms may include

gastric pain, gastritis, gastric ulcer, or even gastric cancer.

TCM often prescribe preserve harmony pill to treat stomach bloating, as it improves gastrointestinal peristalsis and digestion; for gastric ulcer, calm the middle power (an zhong san), pinellia decoction to drain the epigastrium (Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang) with bletilla striata (Ban Ji), radix notoginseng (san qi), and rhizoma corydalis (yan hu suo) to treat ulcerative pain; dandelion for helicobacter pylori infection; wu be san (cuttle bone and zhejiang shellfish powder), flos inulae (xuan fu hua), and haematitum (dai zhe shi) for hyperacidity, gastrointestinal reflux, and heart burns; hawthorn (shan zha), dried citrus peel (chen pi), massa medicata fermentata (shen qu), malt (mai ya), gizzard (nei jin) for indigestion; moderate amount of dispersing stagnated liver qi-activating drug for depression and stress; decoction of cyperus and amomum with six noble ingredients for frail spleen and stomach.

Whatever the symptoms may be or whatever medication is needed, consult a TCM physician for a prescription that tailored to your constitution. Do not purchase the medications in TCM pharmacy on your own to avoid incompatibility that causes more harm than good.

Aside from the recuperation



from TCM prescriptions, a change in dietary habit is crucial. If you want to lose weight by monitoring your diet, try starting a meal with soup and vegetables. For patients with indigestion, though, start a meal with food with high quality protein and fat to prepare stomach for digestion by facilitating the secretion of digestive juice. Avoid stimulating food like fried or spicy ones, establish regular dietary

pattern and in set portions, and perform moderate exercise. Once muscle and nerve coordination improves, autonomous nerves stabilize, digestive function would naturally enhance.

Acupressure and tea drinks are also effective methods of self-care. Massage pressure points 5 min each time, one hour before meal warrant the best result, but other time slots are applicable as well.



### **Rose fat-removal tea :**

**Ingredient :** Rose petals 11.25 g (3 qian), hawthorn 7.5 g (2 qian), dried citrus peel 7.5 g (2 qian)

**Method :** Add 8 bowls of water (app. 1,600 cc) to the ingredients, bring it to a boil, turn to low heat and simmer for 15 min, turn off heat and leave cover on for 15 min. Remove the dregs and is ready for drinking.