



WINTER

The shorter, darker days of winter encourage us to slow down a bit, conserve our energy and become more reflective. Winter is ruled by the Water Element and is associated with the kidneys. Kidney energy is our most basic and fundamental energy. It controls the immune system, bones, bone marrow, brain, body fluids and reproduction. Our longevity is greatly determined by how well we balance this energy. The kidneys store all the reserve Qi (energy) in the body so that it can be used in stressful times, to help heal and to prevent illness.

During the winter, we aim to nurture and nourish our Qi. This helps us prepare ourselves for the expanding energy of spring. Try some of these simple suggestions to help you retain and replenish your Qi this season.

Dine Seasonally

Dehydration, too much salt and excessive behaviors burden kidney energy. Especially at this time of year, we should be drinking more warm liquids, reducing salt intake and balancing the quantities and types of food we eat. Try to avoid too much raw food and opt instead for warming foods. Warming foods help the body remain well-heated. This is the perfect season for:

Soups and Stews
Beans and Root Vegetables
Seaweed and Miso
Whole Grains
Roasted Nuts

Early to Bed

Ensure that you get plenty of sleep. Rest is important to revitalizing the kidneys. Take advantage of the shorter days and go to bed earlier. This also helps you balance all the activity that the holiday festivities bring.

Bundle Up

Dress appropriately for the weather. It's important to protect your neck and shoulders from a chill so make sure you always have a nice warm scarf handy.

Soak Up Some Sunshine

During winter, open your curtains during the day to allow any sunlight to come in and take brisk walks, in the sunshine if possible. The walks will help to improve circulation and blood flow and the sunshine will give you a warming and uplifting boost on a cold winter's day.

Reduce Stress

The holidays are a joyous time but all the added demands and activities can be stressful. Find a way to relax and relive stress. Meditation, keeping a journal or other mindfulness practices can all be helpful. Try to set a specific time everyday to be still. Use the stillness and the silence as a time to reflect and renew.

Add Some Flowing Movement

As the kidneys are associated with the Water Element, incorporate some flowing, fluid movement into your day. Qigong is the perfect practice as it helps to relieve stagnant energy caused by less activity and the cold weather. Qigong will also enhance the flow of vital Qi throughout your body.

Element	Water
Season	Winter
Organ	Kidneys
Color	Dark Blue/Black
Positive Emotion	Courage
Negative Emotion	Fear
Direction	North
Sense	Ears
Taste	Salty