

IMPROVE ENERGY, VITALITY & LONGEVITY

By Barbara M Mendez, RPh, MS



I hope you are all enjoying your summer! Despite the not so great weather, Summer is a great time of year to get healthy, eat right, detox and support the organs in your body that help keep you energized, alive and feeling full of vitality.

In order to maximize your energy level and in turn your ability to feel fully present and alert for the events of your life, it is important to care for and nurture your kidney's and your adrenal glands.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the kidneys are the seat of longevity, regulating your core energy levels while dictating the overall health and well-being of the body. According to this ancient system of healing, weakened kidney energy is the crux of most illnesses including heart disease, arthritis and other inflammatory processes. The kidneys are also affected by fear and anxiety. Chinese Medicine tells us that fear is stored in the kidneys, so one who suffers from chronic stress and anxiety, always focusing on worst case scenarios, tends towards weakened kidney energy more so than the optimist, which in turn affects overall health ~ especially cardiac health.

I've outlined some suggestions to support kidney function to promote health and longevity. Follow these suggestions and you may find that you experience less pain, more energy and a greater sense of well-being than before.

GUIDELINES FOR KIDNEY AND ADRENAL HEALTH

Drink plenty of water: Water helps cleanse the kidneys and assists them in filtering toxins from blood. The ideal quantity of water you should be drinking is half your weight in ounces. So for example, if you weigh 160 pounds, you should be drinking, ideally, 80 ounces of water which is ten 8 ounce glasses daily. Remember that caffeinated drinks such as coffee, tea and cola act as diuretics, increasing your need for more water. In summer, as you sweat more from the heat, be mindful of drinking more water than usual.

Cut back on the caffeine: Caffeine depletes adrenal function which then affects core energy and vitality. Although you may get a jolt from your morning cup of coffee, over the long haul that caffeine is depleting the energy of your adrenal glands. In addition, as mentioned above, caffeinated

drinks have the potential to dehydrate the body, affecting kidney health and therefore, your overall health and longevity. If you are a big coffee drinker, begin by cutting back. If you drink one cup a day, see if you can switch to tea instead. Although tea contains caffeine, it contains less than coffee and tea has health benefits that coffee does not have such as the ability to lower cholesterol and mobilize fat.

Avoid overeating: Overeating is the major cause of aging. Not only does it put a tremendous burden on the kidneys but on the liver as well. This is a very important principle to consider when adopting a healthy lifestyle. Never eat to the point of being full. Eat until satisfied. One great way to accomplish this is to slow down when eating. This allows your brain to receive the message that it is full during your meal rather than 30 minutes later when the need to unbuckle your pants becomes essential. Another trick is to eat some fat containing food at the beginning of the meal such as a piece of salmon or avocado. Consuming fat at the beginning of a meal helps to trigger the satiety center of the brain faster, sending the message that you have had enough, thereby allowing you to control the quantity of food consumed at your meal.

Control sodium consumption: An excess of salt accelerates aging (remember, in Chinese Medicine the kidneys are the seat of longevity) by increasing blood pressure and affecting mineral absorption from other foods which then weakens the bones. Try not adding any additional salt to food and learn to enjoy the more subtle flavors of food.

Eat leaner sources of protein: Go for fish, chicken, eggs and tofu and cut back on

the heavier meats such as beef and organ meats. Fish is good for kidney function especially those high in Omega 3 oils such as salmon and sardines.

Get your Minerals: Organic minerals are very important for healthy kidney function and cellular health. Make sure you are getting plenty of minerals from your diet by consuming plenty of vegetables and adequate amounts of fruit. Now that it's summer, try eating raw salads with plenty of raw vegetables for optimal absorption of minerals. Another great source of minerals is seaweed such as the Nori wrappers on sushi or the wakame in miso soup. Another option is to get granulated seaweed in a shaker bottle to use as a salt substitute. This will not only allow you to get more minerals in your diet, but will help you restrict salt consumption as well.

Control Stress Levels: Fear and anxiety weaken adrenal and kidney energy leading to aging and disease. We live in a stressed out world. In the States we have gone from eight hour days to 12 and even 14 hour days, leaving little time for fun or joy. The state of the World is alarming no doubt, between Global Warming and Iran having nuclear capabilities and if you are a News junky you are hearing this information 24/7 which can aggravate general stress and anxiety you may be experiencing just by living life, trying to be happy. It is important that you find time and explore ways to relieve stress. Exercise is one way, especially meditative exercises such as Yoga or Tai Chi. Another way is to take a "News Fast", often recommended by Dr. Andrew Weil. Don't read the papers or watch the news for one day and notice what happens to your level of anxiety. I can tell you personally that it works. I disconnected my TV about a few years ago and it made a huge difference for

me. Although I keep up to date on the state of the World through Time Magazine and through Internet News, I am no longer exposed to constant images of suffering and threats by crazy religious zealots. I sleep better because of it. Which brings me to the next point.....

Get plenty of rest and sleep: Sleep disorders are a real problem for many people. Whether from stress or age, lack of sleep has both short term and long term consequences. In my experience, people who do not get adequate sleep tend to have cravings that are difficult to control, such as a craving for sweets and often have difficulty losing weight. The reason for that is that lack of sleep activates the stress response, leading the body to believe that it is in a “flight or fight” response. This stress response affects cortisol levels which in turn affect insulin resistance which then leads to weight gain or an inability to lose

weight. In the long term lack of rest leads to premature aging and illness because it weakens kidney energy. If you have a sleep disorder, try not to use prescription sleep aids. Although they put you to sleep, they don’t offer much relief because the sleep is “generic” and lacking in that real release and rejuvenation you get from profound, restful sleep. Instead, look at your bedtime habits; Try to avoid caffeine, large meals and alcohol before bed. Do some light stretching to relax the body and explore alternative sleep aids at your local health food store. If you have tried all of these, and still have a problem, consider having a nutritional consultation for additional guidance.

Barbara Mendez is a registered pharmacist and nutritional consultant in private practice in New York City. She is also the in-house nutritionist for the Harvard Club. For more information on Barbara, please go to her website at www.lifestylenutrients.net Barbara is available for corporate lectures.