



cold-weather Nutrition and the Skin

By Pat Lam

It is important to understand how the cold days of winter cause your clients to change their lifestyles, both physically and psychologically. For example, clients living in the North tend to suffer from more depression than those living closer to the equator, and physically, they tend to hibernate and eat more comfort foods that can contribute to weight gain. Although anti-aging health practitioners preach the benefits of healthy eating for preventive health care, this belief has always been a fundamental part of the Chinese philosophy. Eating in harmony with the season and according to your constitution, as well as keeping physically active, will keep you feeling well and healthy throughout the cold seasons until the warmer days return in spring. Find out what can you do to help clients beat the winter blues, and what skin care advice can be given to maintain clear, healthy skin during the cold, dark winter months.

Living in harmony with the cold seasons

One of the principles of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) denotes that living and eating in accord with the natural environment can contribute greatly to health, and helping your clients change their diets with available foods during different seasons can be very beneficial to their well-being. Fall is a transition period that allows the body to transfer from the extreme heat of summer to the coolness of winter. This change can cause an imbalance in the body's metabolism. With the cold, damp weather of winter in some regions, most people turn toward foods that provide more energy and heat to create warmth for the body. As temperatures drop, the air becomes drier and the body's liquids are reduced, resulting in dry and dehydrated skin.



Winter blues

Many people suffer from winter blues due to shortened days and longer periods of darkness. Many turn toward comfort foods that provide warmth and feelings of fullness, such as cookies; mashed potatoes; root vegetables, such as carrots, turnips, cauliflower and squash; grains; and beans. These foods are easily found during fall and early winter, providing color and variety. Rich meals often feature meats, such as turkey, chicken and lamb that can be seasoned with spices, such as ginger, turmeric, curry, coriander, cinnamon, garlic, clove, fennel and cayenne.

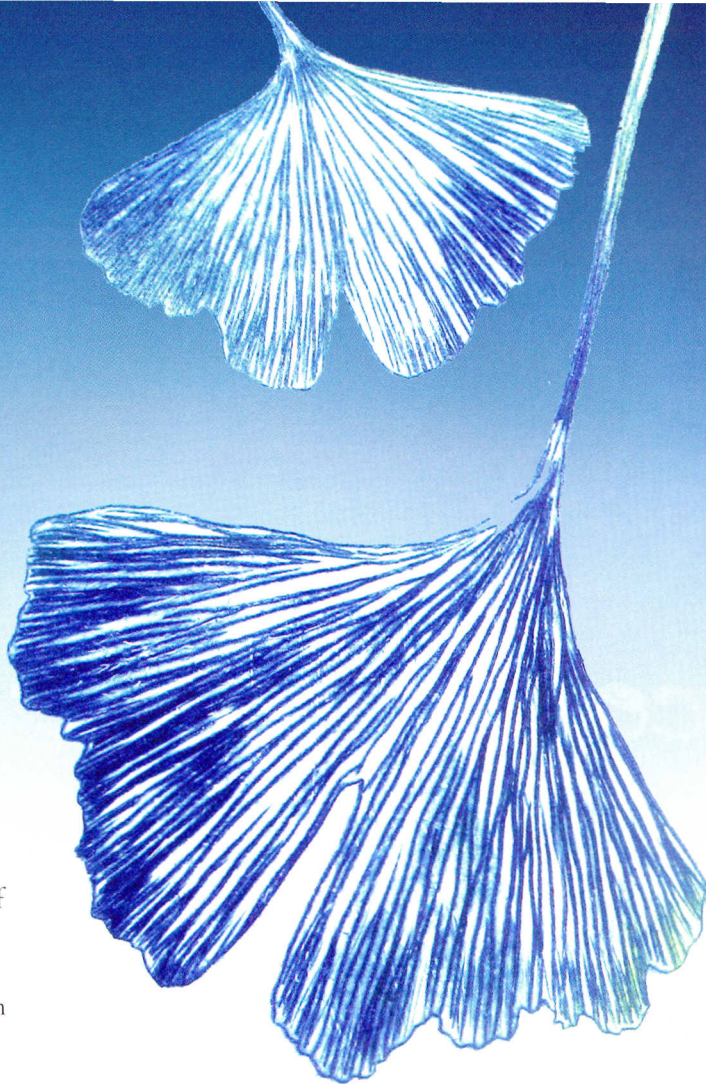
A good detoxification strategy after a rich meal is to eat a very light meal the following day, starting with oatmeal and fruit for breakfast, and eating more vegetarian fare for the rest of the day. Fruits and vegetables, including apples, prunes and broccoli, will promote detoxification.

The recent increased interest in drinking tea instead of coffee has led to numerous tea bars popping up in many cities. Steeped teas have become very popular, so try drinking teas high in antioxidants, such as black and green varieties, to warm the cold body and improve digestion after a meal.

Ginger is highly recommended to increase circulation, especially for warming cold limbs and lowering cholesterol. Legumes, including various beans, such as kidney, garbanzo, lentils and black beans, can be added to steamed rice, soups and stews to add taste, body and flavor. After the holidays, eat leftover turkey meat with whole grain breads, tomatoes and red leaf lettuce. These provide important nutrients, such as fiber and protein, and are wonderful on a cold winter day with a bowl of hot soup to keep the body warm.

Avoid high-fat foods since they will lead to sluggishness and weight gain. A good strategy is to try to stop eating just before you begin to feel full. During the winter months, it is recommended that you consume well-balanced, but moderately sized meals, and stay with warm, moist, nourishing foods, such as steamed rice and vegetables, congees, ghee and mushy soups.

Include some nuts in your diet, as well as herbs to keep the body warm. As an anti-aging strategy to beat the common cold, consume garlic and echinacea to strengthen the immune system. (*Editor's note:* For more information about the role nutrition plays in anti-aging, check out *Nutrition: The Healthy Aging Solution*, Lam Skin, 2008, by Pat Lam).



Traditional Chinese Medicine

TCM is becoming more widespread in Western society. The Chinese believe that food is medicine and medicine is food, and if the correct foods are consumed, drugs are not required, since the body will heal itself. According to TCM, it is important to live in harmony with the environment in order to help the body adapt better to the current weather and remain healthy. It is believed that the body undergoes physiological alterations during changing seasons, and, therefore, different foods need to be taken into the body to balance and maintain good health.

In TCM, a balanced diet does not involve food plans, but relates to a diet that balances yin and yang, the two invisible forces that are in direct opposition to each other. The Chinese believe that everything can be classified as either yin or yang, and good health can only be maintained if both are balanced, because an excess of either one will lead to illness or disease. The belief that the fundamental substances—such as *qi*, the life force—are constantly in motion and exist everywhere, including within the body. The meridians, or energy vessels, in the body are analogous to blood vessels and transport *qi*

and blood throughout the body. This is the essence of Chinese medicine and culture.

According to this philosophical construct, yang foods have warm, dry, light and expansive effects on the body, while yin foods are dark, cool, watery and contracting. Yang needs to be nourished in winter with a dietary intake of hot and spicy foods to maintain balance and health. For more information about TCM, check out Michelle O'Shaughnessy's *Traditional Chinese Medicine: Esthetician's Guide* (Allured Publishing, 2008).

The yin and yang of food

TCM categorizes food into three energetic groups: cool/cold, warm/ hot and neutral to achieve balance in the body. For example, if someone has a cold, they are encouraged to eat warming foods and avoid cold foods, and vice versa if they are suffering from fever or high body heat. Neutral foods are used to create harmony and a balanced state in body tissues. If a person is overweight, suffers from water retention, lethargy and has cold limbs, the body should be drained of dampness. Therefore, this person should consume lightly cooked warming foods and liquids, and avoid cold, raw foods. As the leaves begin to fall, yang qi becomes predominant and yin qi begins to be reduced.

In the summer, cool/cold foods that increase the yin and cool the body are eaten, and include watermelon and salad greens, while warm/hot foods that invigorate the body and strengthen the yang in the tissues are eaten during winter. These include meats, such as lamb, beef and chicken, to reduce the cold from body tissues. Lastly, neutral foods help to balance the yin and yang by reducing or increasing heat in the body, and maintaining the functions of the five main organs: liver, heart, spleen, lungs and kidneys. They include papayas, grapes, mangoes, milk, eggs and honey.

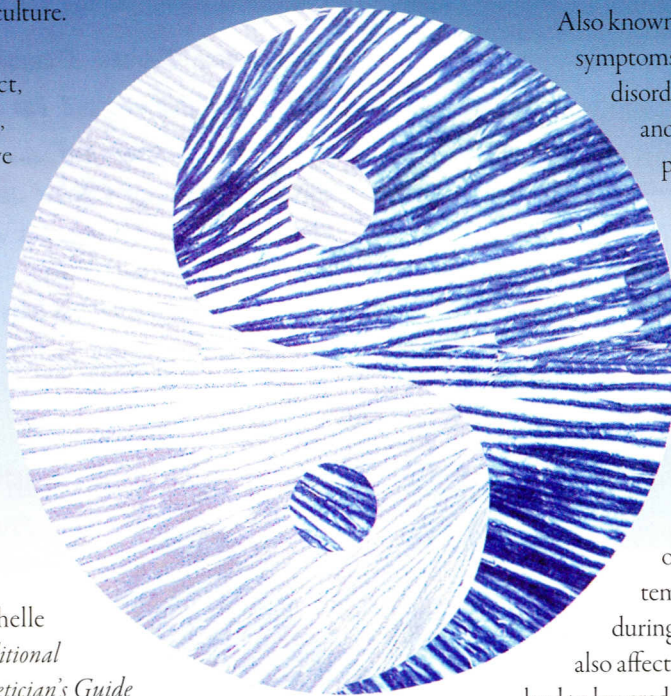
Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Also known as winter blues, the symptoms of this psychological disorder can be mild to severe, and seem to affect many people during the winter months when daylight hours are short. Some symptoms include sadness or depression, irritability, fatigue, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, and, in severe cases, suicidal thoughts. It is attributed to the decreasing amount of daylight and the cooler temperatures that occur during the winter, and may also affect physical behavior and lead to lowered levels of the hormone

serotonin—the mood-enhancing hormone that regulates hunger and the sense of well-being. Reduced levels of serotonin result in lowered levels of melatonin, which regulates sleep, often resulting in insomnia.

Although people of all ages are affected by SAD, studies indicate that it more commonly is a problem for those who live further from the equator. Studies indicate that SAD begins in the fall, ends in the spring and is more common among women than men, but is not as prevalent when snow is on the ground, perhaps because the reflection of the snow provides brightness.

It is recommended that sufferers be exposed regularly to bright light, such as fluorescent light. Julia Ross, author of *The Mood Cure* (Viking Press, 2002), recommends three ways to fight SAD: exposure to bright indoor lights, participation in regular exercise and consumption of healthy foods, such low glycemic index (GI) foods, since high GI foods—highly processed and high in sugar content—tend to increase insulin levels and create sluggishness. Other dietary recommendations include reduced caffeine intake, since it has been shown to suppress the release of serotonin. Choose low-fat protein, such as beans and turkey, brightly colored vegetables and whole fruits; reduce starchy foods that provide little fiber and cookies as snacks. These habits will also help to avoid unwanted weight gain during the winter when the body's metabolism is low. Some



Boost Holiday Sales!



1 Creatively Display Promotions in the Spa Boutique

Create a festive promotional display area for guests to view gift options.

2 Holiday Gift Card Packages

Create gift card packages to include holiday promotions and not only spa services.

3 Guest Gift of Appreciation

Create a holiday gift card for your clients. Offer a percentage off any service or treatment when used during January. This shows appreciation while boosting spa traffic.

4 Holiday Spa Ambiance

Display and light holistic aromatic candles (Spalasium by Pevonía offers a wonderful assortment) to set the perfect relaxing environment, while stimulating your clients' senses.

5 Award a Team Incentive

Offer a special bonus to your spa team for selling gift cards and promotions.

6 Remind Team Daily to

Promote Holiday Promotions

The main key to having a successful holiday season is to precisely train each team member on exactly what you would like them to do and make sure it is done!

Everyone must come out a winner

1. Your clients

2. Your team and

3. and Most of all ...You

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recommendations for snacks include popcorn, nuts, peanut butter and fruit.

In addition to suggesting that clients adjust eating behavior with the seasons, it is also essential to adjust your skin care practices to maintain clients' skin and body.

Winter skin care

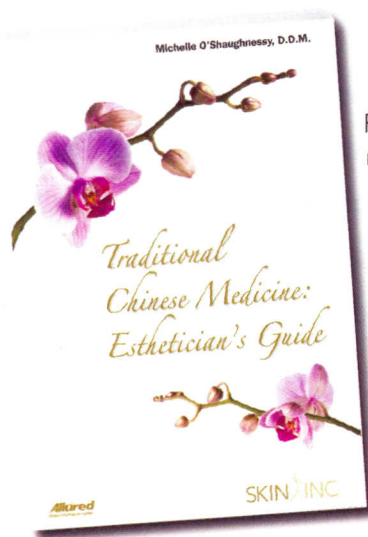
Clients visit you all year round, but it is particularly during the winter that they need professional help to protect and prevent dryness and irritation due to cold weather, which takes a toll on skin, resulting in dryness and cracking on hands and feet, and deepening of lines and wrinkles on the face. Low humidity affects the skin on the face and body, resulting in feelings of extreme dryness, irritation and itchiness, leading to inflammation and conditions such as eczema. Following is some skin care advice to dispense to clients during the winter months.

1. Use more topical moisturizing skin care products. Even clients with oily skin might experience tightness and dehydration, especially if an alcohol-based product was used during the summer. Use a good, nourishing cream on both the face and body to combat the harsh, cold winds and protect against moisture loss from the dry winter air. Avoid alcohol-based products for the skin and hair since they cause extreme dryness.



Traditional Chinese Medicine: Esthetician's Guide

Michelle O'Shaughnessy, D.O.M.



Recognizing the rapid growth in the use of traditional Chinese medicine in spas around the world, author Michelle O'Shaughnessy gives estheticians the secrets they need to implement this ancient tradition: from

acupuncture and facial diagnosis to meridians and acupressure massage.

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2. Protect your hands by using gloves to wash dishes and use a heavy hand cream after the chore. Use softeners in laundry soaps to prevent your clothing from becoming too dry—it will cause itchiness against the skin.
3. When participating in outdoor activities, such as skiing, tobogganing or even walking the dog, it is important to bundle up, but preferably in layers to avoid excess sweat and overheating that can lead to skin irritation. Remember to use a sunscreen containing an SPF 15 or higher if skiing, since the World Health Organization's August 2002 Fact Sheet indicated that the snow reflects about 80% of the sun rays, versus the sand at the beach that reflects 17%.
4. Avoid taking hot baths, sitting in saunas and using hot water to wash the face and body. Use showers with warm water instead, or simply wipe down with warm towels. Overbathing can lead to extreme dryness and itchiness. After a bath, pat skin dry and apply an emollient moisturizer onto slightly damp skin to trap in moisture. Use lip cream or lip balm that leaves a protective layer to keep lips from cracking. Lipstick containing emollient ingredients, such as petroleum jelly, is a must in the winter, and use one containing a sunscreen if you are going to be outside for several hours. Avoid licking the lips, since this habit tends to dry them.

Become the expert

By combining the proper nutrition regimen and skin care routine to combat the challenges of cold winter months, your clients will not only feel better, but they will look to you as an expert in wellness for years to come. ✂

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