

Cardiovascular Health and Traditional Chinese Medicine

The two leading causes of death in the West, stroke and heart disease, are directly related to cardiovascular health. High cholesterol and high blood pressure (hypertension) are conditions with few symptoms but if diagnosed, are indications of a person's increased risk for heart disease and stroke.

Modern research in China has resulted in an integration of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) theories with Western Medicine's understanding of the cardiovascular system.

② **High Cholesterol and Chinese Medicine**

TCM recognises the links between lifestyle, cholesterol levels and coronary heart disease, by using the metaphor of Phlegm to describe this condition. According to TCM, Phlegm is created when we eat a poor diet or when our digestive system is not working optimally. Phlegm can obstruct the proper flow of Qi and Blood in the body. For some people, this can lead to chest pain or even heart attacks.

Research evaluating traditional TCM treatments with modern tests has shown some promising results. For example, a randomized comparative study found that use of a Chinese formula was as effective as the drug, Simvastatin in lowering cholesterol and triglyceride levels and in increasing High Density Lipoprotein levels.¹

Another study looked at the effectiveness of using a single acupuncture point in the treatment of high cholesterol. Out of 110 patients who were treated, 85% had measurable reductions in cholesterol levels.²

The Okinawa Centenarian Study looked at the links between lifestyle and health in Okinawa, Japan. The statistical information collected revealed a changing pattern of risk for coronary heart disease. Older Okinawans who maintained a traditional diet and lifestyle had a low risk, while younger Okinawans who adopted a more Western diet and lifestyle habits had a higher-than-average risk of coronary heart disease.³

② **Hypertension and Chinese Medicine**

TCM uses several different metaphors to describe the processes involved in hypertension. One of the most important ones considers the balance of Yin and Yang in the body. According to Chinese theories, Yin and Yang are complementary opposites that keep each other in balance. Yin is considered to be solid and heavy, while Yang is seen as fluid and light. If there is not enough Yin to anchor Yang, then Yang will float upwards. In the case of hypertension, aging and chronic stress are things that consume Yin thus leaving Yang

unanchored. As Yang floats upward, blood pressure will rise, and with it rises the risks of coronary heart disease and stroke.

A Shanghai hospital reported that a modern Chinese formula was highly effective at treating patients for hypertension. Several studies on a total for 1300 patients found that 73-80% had a reduction of blood pressure and alleviation of their symptoms.⁴ A controlled clinical study that compared Qi Gong to pharmaceutical medications followed 204 patients over a 20-year period. It found that the patients who practiced Qi Gong had half the stroke mortality of the group treated with pharmaceuticals.⁵

A 25-year study of over 12 000 people looked at the relationship between blood pressure and mortality in six different regions of the world. The study found that mortality rates were highest in the U.S. and Northern Europe and lowest in Japan and the Mediterranean. The researchers speculated that dietary differences play an important role in the measured differences.⁶



Tips for Cardiovascular Health

As the above research shows us, diet and lifestyle can affect cardiovascular health. Don't smoke and only drink in moderation. As well, avoid salty, fat-rich foods, especially deep fried food and margarine. Try reducing the amount of meat in your diet and eat more plant-based proteins. A diet that emphasizes whole grains and lightly cooked vegetables is best for optimal digestion. Be sure to include unsaturated fats in your diet. Examples of foods with these good fats are cold water fish, nuts, leafy green vegetables, flax oil, olive oil and canola oils. (Remember not to heat flax oil as this will destroy its beneficial essential fatty acids.) Be sure to do regular exercise and find ways to reduce daily stress levels.

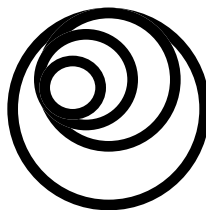
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Disclaimer

This factsheet is not intended to treat, diagnose or prescribe. The information provided is not to be considered a substitute for consultation with a qualified health care practitioner.

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