

## Winter Health

### Keep Warm for Better Circulation. Self-Tuina Massage to Strengthen the Immune System

By Mary Wu

This winter is going to be longer and colder. How can we keep the cold away and to maintain good health?

According to TCM, external cold attacks the body through the body surface and invades the body through meridians. Cold pathogen cause aggregation and obstruction of muscles and tendons and damages the internal yang energy.

To protect the body from the attack of external cold, simple remedies and measures works effectively according to Traditional Chinese Medicine:

#### Keep Warm:

It is extremely important to keep the body warm especially in the winter season. Dress warm, eat properly, have adequate rest and proper exercise are all important lifestyles all year round. The following are some special measures for the winter:

1. Keep the head warm:

The dispersing and consumption of heat of the body is most predominating in the head and it increases significantly with the change of external temperature. In a calm and static state, 1/3 of the total body heat is scattered in 15 degree C, 1/2 under 4 degree C, and 3/4 under -15 degree C. Coldness causes the blood vessels to contract, muscles to tight up which results in headaches, migraines, colds and flu, cramping of stomach. Keeping the head warm is extremely important. Here are a few tips:

- i. Cover your head and neck when you go out
- ii. Dry your hair completely before going out

2. Keep the feet warm:

“Cold starts under the feet”-the feet on the most far part of the body from the heart with the least blood circulation and the lowest temperature. When the feet get cold, it affects the upper respiratory system and impairs the body resistance. This may in turn leads to common cold, upper respiratory infection, abdominal pain and painful period, even cardiovascular diseases. Here are a few tips:

- i. Wear warm socks and boots when go out
- ii. Soak your feet in hot water before going to bed
- iii. Rubbing KI-1 and the toes

3. Keep the back warm:

Back is the yang region of the body where the Du meridian and the Urinary Bladder meridian of foot tai yang is distributed. Du meridian dominates all yang meridians of the body; Urinary Bladder meridian dominates the exterior of the body. There two meridians are the first to be invaded by wind and cold. If the back is well covered and protected, wind and cold will not be able to attack the body. On the other hand, unprotected back

leaves the ways for the easy invasion of wind cold pathogens which will damage the yang qi and cause diseases such as chronic bronchitis, asthma, allergic rhinitis, arthritis, etc. This is especially important for elderly people with hypertension and cardiovascular diseases. Tips to keep the back warm:

- i. Sunbath the back in doors:
  - ii. Expose your back to the sun inside the room near a window for 20 minutes
  - iii. Wear a wool or leather vest
  - iv. Tackle a long shirt under the belt
4. Keep the stomach warm:
- Stomach is the organ that takes food and water directly from outside for digestion and absorption. The digestive system is extremely important in the production of energy and the defensive system of the body. The stomach is easily damaged by cold especially in the winter time when the weather is cold. Damaged stomach may lead to abdominal pain, diarrhoea, indigestion, weakened defensive and immune system. Here are the tips to keep the stomach warm:
- i. Avoid cold and raw food if you have a weak stomach
  - ii. Rubbing the stomach clockwise 100 times and counter clockwise 100 times before go to sleep
  - iii. Drink fresh ginger tea daily

### Self-Tuina Massage:

Life is about activity. Activity depends on proper circulation of qi and blood. Self-tuina massage can not only activate the energy pathways but also strengthen the body circulation in general. Following self-tuina massage is especially good for winter time:

1. Patting:
  - a. Patting the knees with the palms for 300 times
  - b. Patting acupuncture point St-36 on both sides (located one hand below the knee on the lateral side of the tibia) with loose fists for 300 times
  - c. Patting acupuncture points Sp-6 on both sides (located one hand above the ankle on the medial side of the lower leg behind the tibia) with loose fists for 300 times
  - d. Notes: St-36 is an acupoints best known to strengthen the vital energy especially defensive qi that protect the body from the attack of exterior pathogens. Sp-6 is known for regulating blood circulation and tonifies the internal organs. Patting these points can activate the meridians, promote qi and blood circulation and strengthen the defensive energy to prevent the invasion of exterior pathogens causing colds, flues, cough, asthma and allergies. Studies have shown that these two points strengthen the immune system.
2. Rubbing:
  - a. Rubbing back and forth on acupoint KI-1 located in the depression on the front third of the sole for 100 times until a warm and heat sensation is generated. Rubbing both feet.
  - b. Rubbing, grasping and pulling all the toes 100 times on both feet