

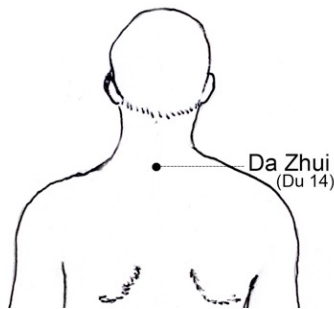
Balancing Act



The Awakening Balance Acupuncture Quarterly Newsletter



Element: **Water** Color: **Blue, Black** Nature: **Yin** Organs: **Kidneys, Urinary Bladder** Emotion: **Fear, Depression**



Featured Seasonal Acupuncture Point: Du 14

One particularly important point to attend to in Winter is Du 14. Located below the spinous process of the seventh cervical vertebrae, approximately at the level where the collar of a T-shirt sits on the neck. Du 14 activates the circulation of blood and Qi to strengthen the outer defense layers of the skin and muscle (wei qi) so that germs and viruses cannot enter through them. This point is often used to ward off, as well as shorten, the duration of colds and the flu. This would be a great point to place an acupuncture magnet or pellet before going on a flight. Ask your acupuncturist for more information.



The Water Element

The ancient Chinese believed that human beings should live in harmony with the natural cycles of their environment. The cold and darkness of winter urges us to slow down. This is the time of year to reflect on our health, replenish our energy, and conserve our strength.

Winter is Yin in nature; it is inactive, dry, cold, and damp. Remain introspective, restful, and consolidate your Qi through the season and prepare for the outburst of new life and energy in the spring.



Rest, Reflect, and Protect

Winter is ruled by the water element, which is associated with the kidneys and bladder. According to the philosophy of traditional Chinese medicine, the kidneys are considered the source of all energy (Qi) within the body.

The kidneys store all of the reserve Qi in the body so that it can be used in times of stress and change, or to heal, prevent illness, and age gracefully. During the winter months it is important to nurture and nourish our kidney Qi. It is the time where this energy can be most easily depleted. Our bodies are instinctively expressing the fundamental principles of winter – rest, reflection, protection, and storage.

Tips for Winter Health

Wash your hands regularly! Studies have shown that one of the main reasons that we catch colds and flu in the winter season is that we are indoors and in closer proximity to others in cold weather. Protect yourself by washing your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.



Get plenty of sleep! The Nei Ching, an ancient Chinese classic, advised people to go to sleep early and rise late, after the sun's rays have warmed the atmosphere a bit. This preserves your own yang Qi for the task of warming in the face of cold.

Reduce Stress! According to TCM, stress, frustration and unresolved anger can work together to throw your immune system off, allowing pathogens to infect your body. Find a way to relax and release stress on a daily basis with an activity like yoga, meditation, biofeedback, simple relaxation therapy, or whatever method you find to release the stress and pressures of modern life.

Build Up Your Protective Qi! Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can prevent colds and the flu by building up the immune system with just a few needles inserted into key points along the body's energy pathways. These points are known for strengthening the circulation of blood and energy and for consolidating the outer defense layers of the skin and muscle (Wei Qi) so that germs and viruses cannot enter through them.

Eat the right foods! Winter is a time when many people tend to reduce their activity. If that's true for you, it's wise to reduce the amount of food you eat, too, to avoid gaining weight unnecessarily. Avoid raw foods during the winter as much as possible, as these tend to cool the body. During winter you should emphasize warming foods: Soups and stews, root vegetables, beans, miso, garlic and ginger are all foods that warm the body's core and keep us nourished.



Treat Those Colds – the TCM Way!

If you've already happened to catch that cold, acupuncture and herbal medicine can also help with the chills, sniffles, sore throat, or fever in a safe, non-toxic way that doesn't bombard your body with harmful chemicals. Acupuncture does not interfere with Western medical treatment. On the contrary, it provides a welcome complement to it in most cases, and with its emphasis on treating the whole person, recovery time for illness is often shortened.

