



*js*

## **Winter**

**Element – Water, Colour – Black, Nature – Yin**  
**Organs – Kidney/Bladder Emotion – Fear/Willpower**  
**Taste – Salty, Condition – Cold, Direction – North**

In Chinese Medicine Winter begins with the Solstice. The short day and long night is the balance point of Yin and Yang. With the Solstice, we are officially in Winter.

Winter is full Yin and has the characteristics of inactive, cool, damp, slow, feminine, and quiet as everything slows down. Our bodies instinctively want to rest, reflect, conserve and store energy. Giving ourselves time for introspection, rest, and conserving energy (Ch'i) prepares us for the outburst of growth and activity in the new year.

This is the season of Yin (darkness and conservation) dominating over Yang (light and movement). Chinese Medicine sees Nature and its patterns, forms and seasons reflected in our bodies and emotions. Each season is associated with an element, emotion, organ, and taste, so if we are in harmony with our environment, we adapt better and stay healthy.

The change from Autumn to the colder, darker days of Winter changes our emotions, and we can feel moody, depressed and lethargic. This is the time to store and conserve, much as bears hibernate or farmers prepare for winter. The more we understand the energy of Nature around us, the better our emotions will be in balance with the world.

Winter is the Water element, and associated with kidneys, bladder, and adrenal glands. According to Chinese wisdom, Kidneys are the source of all energy (Ch'i), and store Ch'i for times of stress and change, to heal, prevent illness, and help aging.

Kidneys govern the low back, so be mindful with snow and cold, and conserve your Kidney Ch'i by treating back injuries quickly as they can persist in winter. This final part of the year can be filled with a hectic pace of shopping, socialising, travelling, decorating and other high energy consumption, so find time to slow down and get in sync with Nature's cycles.

It is important to nurture and nourish your Kidney Ch'i and keep this area warm and covered, since this energy can be easily depleted. This season also stresses the ears so cover your head and neck to fortify kidney energy. In Winter, digestion slows and heart function is at a low ebb so your circulation also slows. Sugar lowers the white blood count, so moderation is key. Watch the Holiday goodie intake!

*Yoga Bloom*

*by Cona Weer*



*js*

This is the perfect time to treat yourself to some Restorative Yoga to nourish your spirit. Understanding how to work with your kidney area in your Yoga can enliven you from the inside out, allowing freedom to keep the water moving, and avoid stagnation in your Ch'i. To activate digestion and keep the spine awake and healthy, infuse your practice with twists. Move with your Kidney energies as you twist from the belly and back body.

Forward folding is another way to focus awareness inward, but make sure you keep the heart lifted in forwards bends or the practice can become melancholy, and exacerbate emotions of fear and depression in the Kidney.

Gentle backbending can help tonify Kidney Ch'i, so focus on the front face of the kidneys as you bend backwards. Keeping the front of the kidneys open allows lifting the entire trunk and keeping the belly engaged and awake.

Chinese believe we can live in harmony with the cycles of Nature to be healthy. The cold and darkness of winter urges us to slow down, and our bodies instinctively understand the principles of winter. This is the time to reflect, replenish, and conserve energy and strength.

Here are a few tips to staying healthy this season:

- 1 Emphasize warming foods like hearty soups and stews, whole grains, roasted nuts, root vegetables, beans, garlic, ginger, miso and seaweed. Warms the core and nourishes Yin
- 2 Sleep early, rest well, stay warm, and expend less energy. Restores Kidney Ch'i.
- 3 Find ways to relax and release stress on a daily basis. Include yoga, meditation, relaxation therapy or nap. Releases stress and pressures of life.
- 4 Share thoughts and release emotions that are stuck or repeating, and find moments for meditation. Nourishes and strengthens wisdom/willpower.
- 5 Seasonal acupuncture help tonify the organ system. Preventative treatment for body harmony.

*Yoga Bloom*

*by Cona Weer*