



**WILD ROOTS**

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE  
& ACUPUNCTURE CLINIC

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## Foods to Eliminate Dampness and Phlegm

To treat dampness and phlegm with diet, two aspects must be considered. Firstly, foods which create dampness and phlegm, such as dairy, processed carbohydrates, sweets and rich or overly supplementing foods should be avoided. Secondly, a diet which supports spleen and stomach functions must be adhered to. Carbohydrates should be used moderately as they tend to be sweet, and an excessive amount can create or aggravate dampness. In general, between 30-40% of the dietary bulk can be composed of well chewed and unrefined or unprocessed carbohydrates. The best sources are the more drying varieties rice, rye, barley, millet and oats.

Vegetables with a mixture of sweet, bitter and pungent varieties can make up 40-50% of the diet. The remainder can be a small amount of high quality animal protein. Soy proteins, especially tofu, can be too cooling and moistening when used in excessive amounts. Nuts and seeds should be avoided as they are moistening and oily which can generate dampness.

The general principles and foods that apply to maintaining healthy spleen qi are also applicable here as a strong digestive system will break food down more efficiently, with a less likely chance of dampness becoming a by-product. And to help resolve dampness that is already present, the spleen must be functioning well.

Emphasise bitter and spicy flavours and foods; all food cooked and warm; low intake of fats and oils, dairy and sugar; eat less at each sitting.

### **Beneficial foods are:**

Follow the guidelines for healthy digestive qi closely plus eat more:

Buckwheat, barley, corn, rye sourdough bread, caraway rye, pumpernickel, dry roasted oats, lettuce, celery, pumpkin, onion, shallot, scallion, garlic, turnip, watercress, adzuki bean, broad bean, radish, extra virgin olive oil, mustard, horseradish, clam, lean meat, white and black pepper, clove, cardamom, nutmeg, dill seed, cilantro, oregano, thyme, basil, fresh ginger.

Use sparingly: sweet potato, yams, potato, red and green tea.

### **Foods and practices to avoid:**

Late night meals, deep fried or highly processed/refined foods and overeating.

Excessive intake of oils, fats, all dairy products, nuts and nut butters are cautioned. As with spleen deficiency guidelines, avoid overuse of raw and cold foods.

Dairy products, especially for those with phlegm (such as in the case of asthma), will often become a necessary group of foods to avoid. It is a highly mucus forming food and, for many, causes problems.

Sugar and refined carbohydrates create dampness and must be avoided. For those where dampness is quite a concern all sugar must be avoided. And it is generally good practice to reduce the amount of sweets consumed.

Damp and phlegm reducing diets can feel restrictive at first. Where complete removal of offending foods is too restrictive, certain modifications and combinations can be made. Specifically, bitter, pungent or drying foods can be added to rich or cloying foods to prevent dampness from forming. Common examples of this approach include; combining meats with mustard, horseradish or bitter and pungent vegetable such as turnips and pumpkin; using pungent toppings on pasta (made with plenty of onions and garlic or pesto); combining cheese and chutney; sipping wine with meat meals; green tea with fried food; hot sauce on fried eggs; and selecting bitter ales. With little thought, it is actually quite easy to modify a typical western diet so that it is less deleterious and damp generating.

The anti-damp diet can also be called a Chronic Disease or Regeneration Diet or the Clear Bland Diet. More information on this approach to treating severe and chronic diseases can be made available to you upon request.

*Adapted From: Maclean, Will and Jane Lyttleton. (1998) Clinical Handbook of Internal Medicine. MacArthur, University of Western Sydney.*