



**WILD ROOTS**

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE  
& ACUPUNCTURE CLINIC

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## **Foods that Build the Blood**

Building blood requires two things, specific nutrients that generate blood, and adequate absorption of those nutrients. Absorption of nutrients is maximized by encouraging healthy digestive function or, in Chinese Medical terminology, spleen qi. We must have strong digestive function to build blood.

Blood building requires a greater protein intake. The best sources of protein for blood building are animal proteins, in particular, chicken. It is possible to build blood on a vegetarian diet, but the results are much slower. Preparing food that supplements the blood in a form that is also easy to digest and supports spleen function is ideal such as stocks and soups made with organic chicken or beef bones which release pure jing (essence) from their bone marrow – bone broths. When animal protein is not appropriate, some form of supplementation, in the form of tablets or liquid, may be useful, at least in the short term.

Blood quality is also directly affected by the levels of additives in food, especially hormones and excessive sugar and fat. Meat should be organic or at least chemical free. Where this is not possible it is better to have some lesser quality meat than none at all. When liver is used, it must be organic, as the liver concentrates additives in animal feed. Liver is a wonderful food to build the blood. Try making your own liver pate. Explore the book *Nourishing Traditions* by Sally Fallon.

The emphasis of a blood building diet should be towards high nutrient content in quality foods. Non starchy vegetables, high quality (preferably organic) animal protein, and complex carbohydrates (rice, wheat, oat, starchy root vegetables, etc) will provide a good balance.

As the blood is replenished the overall proportions of the diet can be altered to reflect the general spleen strengthening proportions.

Follow the same basic approach presented for spleen qi deficiency (as the spleen produces blood). In Strict vegetarian diets, B12 may need to be supplemented.

Foods to eat more of:

High quality protein, meat, especially chicken (meat and soup), fish, beef and pork liver, oyster, mussel, eel, stocks and broths, bone marrow, eggs, legumes, black beans, green leafy vegetables, wheatgrass, spinach, cherries, carrots, beetroot, parsley, molasses, fermented bean products, miso, tempeh, seaweed, spirulina, black sesame seed, lychee, coconut, rice, stout, Guinness, vegemite.

### **For the liver:**

As for general blood deficiency as well as goji berries cooked with chicken or in rice porridge.

### **Foods that consume or dry the blood or foods that can impair spleen function thereby inhibiting proper blood production:**

Follow the same guidelines here as for spleen qi deficiency, avoiding an over consumption of raw or uncooked salads or an excessive intake of cold or chilled foods.

Avoid extremely bitter, sour, salty, and pungent/hot foods, refined sugars, chemical additives, and hormones.

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