

Disclaimer: This handout is presented for information purposes only. Every woman is different, and the best way of learning how to most effectively use Chinese medicine to treat morning sickness, or any condition, is to meet with a Chinese medical practitioner who can evaluate your particular case and make specific recommendations.

Morning Sickness and Chinese Medicine

In Chinese medicine, morning sickness is seen as a disharmony between the stomach/spleen and the liver. As the mother's body increases blood production to provide nourishment for the growing fetus, production can exceed demand and the fetus can not make use of all of the extra blood. The body normally stores extra blood in the liver, but the excess blood causes the liver to become over-full. The normal physiological reaction is for the liver to send the excess Qi and blood to the stomach, causing nausea and vomiting (a purgative response to decrease the excess). There are several more complicated patterns associated with morning sickness, but this is the most common pattern seen clinically. The simplest approach to this type of morning sickness is to nourish the spleen/stomach and sooth the liver.

From a Shamanic viewpoint, the soul of the fetus enters the body of the mother during the first month after conception. It may take several months for the mother to get used to having a second soul within her body, which leads to a purgative response to try to rid the body of the discomfort. This often takes the form of nausea and vomiting. From this angle, the best approach is to meditate on or talk with the baby to make it welcome.

What follow are three sections: acupressure, food cures, and lifestyle recommendations. I have included a bibliography at the end, and a list of recommended readings for pregnant women. If you have comments on this handout, have books you have found very helpful, or have found a cure for morning sickness I have not listed, please email me at Aaron@AcuMS.com and let me know about it.

Acupressure

There are three main points used when dealing with morning sickness: Pericardium 6, Conception vessel 12, and Stomach 36. These are points the mother can use on herself, or they can be done by the birth partner. Experiment with the points to see which works best. Pericardium 6 is generally considered the best point for nausea, but it will depend on the individual. Apply light to medium pressure to the points, and gently vibrate your finger while pressing. If another person is applying the pressure, make sure to get lots of feedback from the mother.

A note on point location: The diagrams below are for the normal location of the point. The exact location of the point varies from individual to individual, so find the general area of the point and feel for the point. This may take the form of sensitivity to pressure on the point, or a warm or cold spot on the skin, or a change in the skin texture, or an area of redness. For people who are sensitive to Qi (and don't worry if you are not), you may feel an increase in the energy are the point. The most important thing is to experiment with the points (pressure, location, vibration) and find the way that works best for you.

Acupressure Points

Pericardium 6 is located on the palmar aspect of the forearm between the two tendons in the center of the forearm. Curl your hand to make the tendons stand out and find the channel between them. Relax your forearm, and gently run your finger from the wrist towards the elbow. The point is located in the first depression your finger falls into. To check the location: the distance from the wrist crease to the point is the same as the length of the last two bones on your partner's index finger. Use this point by either gently pressing a finger into the point and holding or pressing the point and vibrate your finger.

Stomach 36 is located one handbreadth beneath the knee on the front of the shin bone. Find the bony protuberance at the top of the shin bone and gently slide your finger down along the outside of the bone. The first depression is the point. To check the location: measure one of your partner's handbreadth (the width of four fingers minus the thumb measured at the knuckles) from just beneath the kneecap down to the point. This is a good point to rub along the meridian: start at the knee and rub down the leg along the outside of the tibia (shin bone).

Conception vessel 12 is located on the mid-line of the abdomen, at the midpoint on a line between the belly button and the bottom of the ribcage. Place a finger on the belly button and gently move upward on the midline of the abdomen until you contact bone. Place your other finger on your belly button and divide the distance between your two finger to find the point. There is generally a small depression at point. **As this point is located in the abdomen, use very light pressure here, and do not use any object to press on this point.** It is very difficult to judge your pressure when using an object to press on the point. **If you feel any discomfort when pressing on this point, stop immediately. Do not use this point after the first trimester.**

Food Cures

The Spleen/Stomach is the primary digestive organ in Chinese medicine, so changing your eating habits can have a big effect on morning sickness. The three main approaches are to strengthen the spleen/stomach, soothe the liver, and harmonize the relationship between the two. The wonder food seems to be millet (see recipe below), which, along with all food, is most effective when organic and in whole grain form. In general, food should be chewed well, and taken in easily digestible form (well-cooked). Small frequent meals are better than large ones.

Foods Specifically for morning sickness:

Millet – good for KD, SP, & ST, - eat millet soup or congee regularly (Pitchford, p. 427)

Cooked Millet: (Pitchford, p. 427)

1 cup millet, soaked

3 cups water

a few grains of sea salt

-Place millet and salt in a pot of water. Cover

- Bring to a boil. reduce heat to low.

-Simmer 30 minutes or pressure cook 20 minutes

-Serves two

Millet Congee:

1 cup millet

6 cups water

a few grains of sea salt

- cook as above, but long enough to produce a porridge (usually about 1 hour)

- or mix water and millet in a pot and place in the refrigerator over night, then cook in the morning to desired consistency.

Ginger – good for nausea and vomiting. Avoid with signs of heat (Pitchford, p. 170)

Morning elixirs – water, herbal tea, vegetable broths, green drinks (wheat/barley grass or spirulina), vegetable or fruit juice. All should be drunk at least slightly warmed. (Pitchford, p. 217)

Apples – prepare 30-60g fresh apple peel. Fry 30g rice until yellowish; mix the rice with apple peel to make tea to alleviate morning sickness. (Lu, p. 62)

Polished White Rice - Fry 1 bowlful polished rice with fresh ginger juice until the rice becomes yellowish. Chew 20-30 grains before getting up in the morning to relieve morning sickness. (Lu, p. 110)

Grapefruit Peel - Steam 9 g grapefruit peel and 12 g Chinese salted brown olives in 600 to 700 ml water until olives are fully cooked. In general, this remedy should relieve morning sickness after eating it 5 to 7 times. (Lu, p. 151)

Grapefruit Peel - Boil 15 to 20 g grapefruit peel in water. Drink it as tea to relieve morning sickness. (Lu, p. 151)

Sweet Rice and Ginger - Fry 250 g sweet rice with 30 ml of fresh ginger juice until the rice breaks; grind into powder. Take 10 to 20 g in warm water each time, twice a day, to cure morning sickness. (Lu, p. 151)

Vinegar and Egg - Bring 60 ml rice vinegar to a boil; add 30 g sugar and stir until dissolved; break the egg into the boiling vinegar. When the egg is cooked, drink the whole thing to relieve morning sickness. (Lu, p. 151)

Tonifying Spleen & Stomach (Pitchford, p. 302):

Foods that are sweet and/or pungent. Avoid cold or cooling foods.

- well-cooked rice, oats, spelt, sweet rice, pounded sweet rice (mochi).
- Carbohydrate rich vegetables: winter squash, carrot, rutabaga, parsnip, turnip, chick peas, black beans, peas, sweet potato, yam, pumpkin
- Pungent vegetables and spices: onion, leek, black pepper, ginger, cinnamon, fennel, garlic, nutmeg
- Small amounts of certain sweeteners & cooked fruits: rice syrup, barley, malt, molasses, cherry, and date.
- For severe deficiency, small amounts of animal products prepared in a soup or congee can be helpful: mackerel, tuna, halibut, anchovy, beef, beef liver or kidney, chicken, turkey, or lamb. Butter is the only recommended dairy product.

Soothing the Liver (Pitchford, p. 286)

- avoid over eating
- avoid foods high in saturated fats, hydrogenated and poor quality fats and oils, excesses of nuts and seeds, chemicals in food and water, all intoxicants, and highly processed or refined foods.

Lifestyle Recommendations

Nourishing the Spleen:

Touch: the spleen loves physical contact, especially skin to skin contact. Hugs and spooning are great ways to nourish the spleen.

Stretching: Gentle, playful stretching, especially when lying or sitting on the earth (dirt or grass). The spleen is part of the earth element, and any activity that re-connects you with the earth is a good thing. (Leggett, p. 46)

Structure: The spleen is responsible for creating structure within our bodies, so any activities that you can do to help create structure in your life will be beneficial. Waking and sleeping at the same time, eating at the same times each day, or following an exercise, meditation, or prayer regimen is helpful. (Leggett, p. 46)

Create a good home: The structure within which you spend most of your time is very important. Many people find themselves “nesting” while they, or their partner, is pregnant. Indulge this in a relaxed manner. Having a warm, loving home is just what the spleen is looking for. (Leggett, p. 47)

Eating: The spleen loves a long, relaxed, sit-down meal. Try to have at least one of these per day.

Soothing the Liver:

Physical Exercise: The liver is responsible for the free flow of Qi throughout the body, so any type of movement and activity make it easier for the liver to do its job. Avoid over-exercising, where you feel exhausted afterwards, but maintaining a good exercise regime can help you stay relaxed. I usually recommend Tai Chi or Yoga (especially pre-natal yoga) because they are both gentle and powerful. (**Note:** Being pregnant is a big change for your body, and can be a big drain on your energy. All exercise while pregnant should be gentle and done in a relaxed manner. If you are a person who enjoys being pushed during workouts, now is a good time to learn how to take it easy.)

Creative activities: Art, sculpture, dancing, writing, gardening, throwing pottery, and other creative activities can help give your liver expression. The liver enjoys movement of Qi in the body on physical, spiritual, and mental levels. The Qi blockages may exist on any of them. (Leggett, p. 65)

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Recommended reading:

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