

## Practical Preventable Medicine



### Weak Bladder and Incontinence

I'll never forget the day back at university when my friend who was pregnant had yet another day off. "You promised you'd be in yesterday" I scolded her jokingly. "I was on my way", she explained, "and then I sneezed..."

Most of us will understand what pregnancy can do to a bladder, but for many people, this is a reality of daily life, and not just the elderly. It seems both men and women do suffer what is now called an 'overactive bladder' that includes both urgency and stress incontinence as well as frequent urination without any leakage, and is found in 17% to 49% of the population increasing with age.

Some factors that exacerbate the problem include cold weather, being overweight, hormone issues, age and some medications. Interestingly even though incontinence tends to increase as hormones such as oestrogen and progesterone falls, oral hormone replacement therapy can actually aggravate the problem, and menopause in women is not always the cause in itself. Caffeine is not as much as a contributor as first thought but wise to keep to a minimum and high intakes of saturated fats seem to aggravate symptoms.

In Chinese Medicine there are a number of causes including a Kidney Yin or Yang deficiency that tends to prevent the Kidney's role of governing water passages. Kidneys are affected by fear and stress via the heart so it's easy to understand how a nasty fright can make most people incontinent momentarily.

Factors that can help include weight loss if overweight, magnesium supplementation is well tolerated, and of course the fabulous 'pelvic floor exercises' do have good results but must be done properly and kept up to maintain their effect.

Acupuncture has showed some consistently good results that seem to be long lasting, especially if combined with moxibustion (heating the points with special cigar-like sticks) and herbs. Apparently there is a fabulous electronic magnetic feedback chair that you sit on that are used in Germany, that give local electrical stimulation that sound interesting...(!?) Food wise, eat plenty of walnuts, red kidney beans (and other beans such as adzuki) and good old steak and kidney to nourish your kidneys and this can help strengthen the bladder, as does a good amount of parsley, cinnamon ginger and nutmeg.

Until next time  
Stay well

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