

Liver Qi stagnation

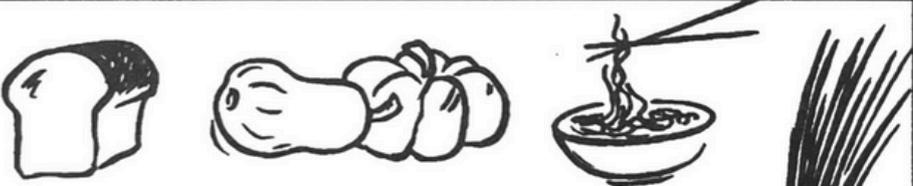
Qi stagnation is mostly associated with dysfunction of the Liver. From a biomedical perspective, the liver detoxifies the body, and all substances that enter the gastrointestinal tract go through the liver. The liver processes and metabolises natural and synthetic compounds. With the ever-increasing load of synthetic substances in our foods and pharmaceuticals in the modern world, it is often overloaded.

The Liver can be affected by the ingestion of too much food or by eating too frequently, before the previous meal has digested. In CM, the Spleen organises digestion, but it is the Liver that regulates the timing and distribution of resources to the Spleen. Overloading the Spleen by overeating has a knock-on effect on the movement of the Liver qi.

Astringing and congesting foods should be avoided if there is Liver qi stagnation. Foods which have a mild pungent, dispersing nature should be favoured. You should eat less (leaving the table feeling as though you could continue eating) and take the last meal in the late afternoon or early evening. Do not eat with turbulent or volatile emotions; eat in a calm and relaxed environment.

Portions

Emphasis of the diet should be towards vegetable matter, with plenty of greens, yellows and reds, complemented by the pungent, dispersing items. Lightly spiced foods, such as curries and Asian-style dishes, help circulate the qi. Carbohydrates and proteins should be secondary, together constituting less than half the diet.

Protein (~10%)	
Carbohydrate (~30%)	
Vegetables, fruit (40-60%)	

General principles

Yes: eat less; main meals earlier in the day; concentrate on light and mildly spicy foods; stir-frying, poaching and steaming; high vegetable, low carbohydrate, low meat.

No: processed, junk or adulterated food; unnecessary drugs or intoxicants; eating when upset or under pressure; skipping meals; eating quickly; overeating.

Beneficial

Mild dispersing, pungent flavours: spices, onion, garlic, mustard greens, watercress, turmeric, basil, mint, peppermint, horseradish, pepper, cardamom, cumin, fennel, dill, ginger, small quantities of grape or rice wine (red is best), coffee (1 per day); care with warming foods when there is stagnant Heat.

Sour flavours (small amounts): citrus, vinegar, pickles, sour cherry, plums.

Other: Plenty of fresh vegetables, some fruits; sprouted grains, asparagus, taro, cabbage, turnip, cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, beetroot, Jerusalem artichoke, sourdough rye bread, extra virgin olive oil, molasses, small amounts of high-quality meat protein and fish.

Restrict or avoid

Food high in saturated fats and oils: cheese, eggs, cream, ice cream, red meats, lard, shortening, margarine, nuts, pizza, hot chips.

Excessively hot and pungent flavours: hot chillies and peppers, spirits.

Excessive cold or refrigerated food: ice cream, beer, salads and raw vegetable juices, white wine.

Artificial synthetic substances: preservatives, colourings, pharmaceuticals (as appropriate).

Reference: MacLean, W. (2021). Clinical Handbook of Internal Medicine: The Treatment of Disease with Traditional Chinese Medicine: Vol 2: Spleen and Stomach (1st ed.). University of Western Sydney.

