

## **WEAK DIGESTION (DAMP FOOD)**

### **Dampness, Mucus and Microbes**

The amount and quality of dampness present in the digestive tract and throughout the body are further measures of the health of the spleen-pancreas and therefore of digestion in general. The concept of dampness unifies many separate mucous, bacterial, viral and yeast imbalances in the body under a few simple dietary treatments.

Dampness, a yin disorder, includes any overly wet or moist condition in the body. It can come from the environment, or it can be due to poor diet or internal organ weakness.

Damp excesses in the digestive tract, lungs, bladder, sexual organs, and elsewhere most often appear as:

1. Various types of mucoid deposits or moist accumulations such as edema, cysts, tumors, cancers.
2. An overgrowth of yeasts, viruses, putrefactive bacteria, amoebas, and/or parasites.

These two groups are related to each other, since nearly every chronic mucous condition appears in the context of a proliferation of micro-organisms.

### **Symptoms of Dampness:**

-Dampness can invade the joints and if there is pain, it is fixed in one place. Any part or all of the body, can be affected by damp swelling or edema.

-Dampness in the form of mucus also affects the heart and lungs, and is the cause of the most common problems in these organs.

-When dampness affects the spleen-pancreas-the intestines and digestion in general-symptoms may include feelings of heaviness, particularly in the head, lack of appetite, bloated abdomen, and watery stools; the coating on the tongue is thick and possibly dirty or greasy.

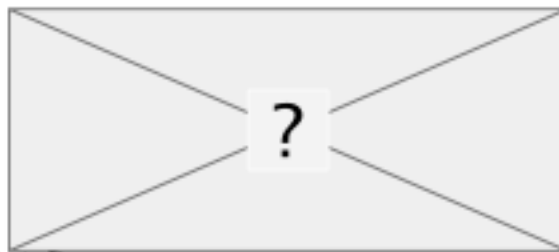
**\*\*\*In many cases, the cause of digestive dampness is the deficient qi (pronounced chee). Damp diseases in general have a sluggish, stagnant quality and often take a long time to cure.**

### **Dampness and Degenerative Disease**

Many chronic illnesses involve dampness. Fully two-thirds of the typical diet in the United States consists of animal products, which promote any of the various types of dampness mentioned earlier. In addition, dampness often combines with heat, wind, and/or cold, so these other factors must be taken into account when formulating a dietary plan. Cancer, multiple sclerosis, AIDS, chronic fatigue syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, and other apparently virus or micro-organism related degenerations usually involve pathogenic dampness in conjunction with various other contributing factors.

These kinds of conditions, true to the nature of deeply situated dampness, are not easily resolved by either traditional healing methods or modern medicine. Each case needs to be diagnosed and treated individually. However, there do seem to be common threads running through such imbalances: most of these conditions begin with yeast excesses in the digestive tract, and most respond to a diet that is not dampness inducing (which is low in fats and mucus-forming food and high in whole, unprocessed vegetal foods). Nearly all such afflicted individuals improve if foods are added that decrease dampness in general. In addition, specific herbal, acupuncture, exercise, awareness and other therapies can be custom-tailored to each individual.

Exercise is essential. Just as a damp cloth does not mold if it is hung out in circulating air, appropriate exercise oxygenates the body. The beneficial effect of exercise on the damp condition of obesity is well-known. Listed next are the dietary factors to avoid dampness, followed by those which are recommended; these suggestions form a dietary foundation for healing the multitude of imbalances in which dampness is a central feature.



### **Dietary Factors Which Contribute to Dampness**

-Too much raw, cold, sweet, or mucus-forming food.

The digestive “fire” of the spleen-pancreas is extinguished by an excess of raw food, including too many raw fruits, vegetables, sprouts, and juices, which cause a thin, watery mucus or dampness. A similar effect occurs from too much cold food – normally, food should be room temperature or warmer. The appropriate amount of raw food in the diet depends on the strength and condition of the individual, the climate, and the person's level of activity. Robust and overheated people usually benefit from an increased intake of raw foods; warmer climate and greater physical activity also increase one's ability to tolerate raw food in the diet.

Signs of excess raw-food consumption include weakness, coldness, and watery stools. Many vegetarian raw-food zealots have severely damaged their health by not knowing when to introduce some cooked food. At the same time, it must be emphasized that numerous disease conditions involving general excess (robust, extroverted nature, reddish complexion, thick tongue coating, forceful pulses) have been overcome with the cleansing action and therapeutic use of raw food.

Intake of highly sweet and other mucus-forming foods needs to be limited; these include meats, eggs, dairy products, fats such as lard and butter (avoid hydrogenated fats such as margarine altogether) oils, oily foods such as nuts and seeds (especially peanuts) and foods containing concentrated sweeteners. Simple sugars from yeasts. Those who are afflicted with dampness related to *Candida albicans* yeasts should follow candida dietary plans, which are more specific than this plan.

A small amount of mucus, however, is necessary in the digestive tract and along all mucous membranes. Moderate amounts of complex carbohydrates (grains, vegetables, legumes) in the diet supply a light and beneficial coating, although large amounts create excessive deposits. Overconsumption of dairy, eggs, or meat causes the thickest, stickiest mucous conditions. Other contributors include:

- Food that is refined or highly processed, rotten, stale, parasite-infested, or chemically treated.
- Too many ingredients in a meal (poor food combining)
- Late-night eating
- Over-eating

Products with several damp causing properties seem to have much worse effects than the mere sum of their properties. Ice cream, for instance, is very sweet, cold, highly mucus-producing, and often full of chemical additives; furthermore, its concentrated sweeteners and often added sweet fruits do not combine well with dairy, a high-fat protein. Regular consumption of ice cream contributes to abdominal lumps, cysts, tumors, and other damp conditions in general. Ice cream substitutes, even those made of high-quality ingredients are very sweet and cold, and therefore support damp excesses and should be avoided by susceptible individuals.

### **Foods Which Dry Dampness:**

Rye, amaranth, corn, adzuki beans, celery, lettuce, pumpkin, scallion, alfalfa, turnip, kohlrabi, white pepper, raw honey; all bitter herbs such as chaparral (*Larrea divaricata*), chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*), and pau d'arco (*Tabebuia*); and the micro-algae *dunaliella* and wild blue-green (*Aphanizomenon*). Raw goats milk is the one dairy product that will not usually contribute to damp conditions in the body.

**Exterior Dampness:** Damp conditions are not only diet-related. Overexposure to dampness in the environment will worsen internal damp conditions. “Damp Environment” applies not only to weather but to other damp situations like sitting too long on cold, damp ground.

Excerpted from:  
Healing with Whole Foods, by Paul Pitchford