

What causes swollen ankles?

If you have been suffering from swollen ankles for some time, you may also be experiencing lower back ache, tiredness, a feeling of coldness (especially in the back and legs), early morning diarrhoea and maybe a little depression.

The root cause of this particular case of oedema in Traditional Chinese Medicine terms, is a deficiency of the kidney yang and dysfunction of the spleen and lungs.

Yang is our "Fire" our central heating system, keeping us warm and providing heat for all our body's functions. If we are yang deficient, we cool down and therefore our metabolism slows down. The yin part (moistness) will accumulate, which is marked by a retention of water under the skin making the skin swell.

The production, distribution and discharge of body fluids depends mainly on the function of the stomach, spleen, lungs and kidneys. Body fluids are produced through the digestion and absorption of the food and drink by the stomach, separation of the "good and bad" by the small intestine and then the transportation of the "good" body fluids by the small intestine to the spleen.

Part of the spleen's transporting function, is to move fluids upward to the lungs. The lungs regulate the water passages. By dispersion, the lungs "sprinkle" the body fluids over the entire body to nourish and moisten, and a portion of the body fluids in the body surface is turned into sweat, which is discharged out of the body.

In the process of body fluid metabolism, the kidneys play a decisive role. The functions of the lungs, stomach and small intestine all depend on the boosting action of the kidney Qi (our body's energy system). In addition, the fluids of the body need the transformation and steaming action of the kidneys so the "good" fluids can go back to the body to be re-used and the "bad" changed into urine to be eliminated from the body.

All in all, the production, distribution and discharge of bodily fluids all depend on our Qi and the physiological functions of the lungs, spleen and kidneys.

Specific acupuncture points would be used to tonify the spleen and Kidney yang, and to resolve the oedema. Acute oedema can be resolved fairly easily but chronic oedema will usually require a lengthy treatment of several months.

Massage is a good treatment partner with acupuncture and by proper application, swelling can be reduced, ultimately restoring normal circulation of the blood and lymph. Used together, the results can have out-standing results.

I would also advise you to avoid too much cold food and liquid, raw or rich foods and to move towards more warming foods and drinks that will encourage warm circulation in the body. The longer the cooking method (roasting/grilling), the warmer the foods. Although, don't think "the hotter the better". If you go overboard on hot spicy foods, you will sweat and you will start to lose energy and begin to cool.

To summarise: With the correct application of diet, acupuncture, massage and exercise, it will not only reduce your swollen ankles on a permanent basis, but make you feel more energised and give you a sense of overall well-being.

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