

# Dampness

Dampness is undigested stuff that the body is not processing. Dampness makes the body and mind sluggish and impedes digestion. It's turbid, heavy, tends to linger, and interferes with optimal functioning. It's microbes and their biofilms.

To prevent dampness, we must support our digestive fire, captained by the Spleen in Chinese Medicine. **Spleen** digests life, transforms input into nourishment, extracting what's useful and sending what isn't down to the large intestine to get purged. It's a primary source of energy, muscular strength, immunity, and clear thinking.

**Signs of dampness include:** swelling, edema, joint pain that's worse with damp weather, a thick coat on your tongue, cysts, fatty deposits, tumors, cellulite, a feeling of heaviness in the limbs, lethargy, dullness in thinking, extra weight. *If it's icky and sticky, it's damp.*

**In the upper body:** foggy thinking, nasal congestion, runny nose / post-nasal drip, headaches with a sensation of fullness, dizziness, mental confusion, brain fog, allergies.

**In the gut,** dampness causes gas, dampness manifests as gas, bloating, nausea, diminished appetite.

**In the lower body,** dampness shows up as ovarian cysts, vaginal discharge, yeast infections, urinary tract infections, yfoul-smelling poop, mucus in the stool, toenail fungus, Athlete's foot.

When **dampness combines with heat**, you'll see acne, styes, gout, sinus infections, skin outbreaks involving redness and swelling.

## To reduce dampness:

### Avoiding the dampening stuff is key. Avoid:

- Fried, greasy foods
- Foods served below room temperature (raw food, iced drinks)
- Sugary foods (cookies, cake, ice cream)
- Alcohol
- Wheat, any refined flour products like bread, pasta, baked goods
- Highly processed or chemically treated foods (stuff the body doesn't recognize)
- Dairy products (especially milk and cheese): dairy creates mucus
- Fatty meats (especially feedlot beef and processed meats)



- Fruit juice and tomato sauce (whole non-tropical fruit is OK; concentrated essence of fruits, like juice or sauce is too much)
- Nut butters (a handful of nuts is OK, concentrated essence of nut is too much)
- Bananas and tropical fruits
- Overeating and grazing
- Moldy environments, wearing damp clothes, stuffing your emotions, worrying

## Give Your Digestive Fire Good Fuel

- **Don't overthink it: just focus on warm, cooked, simple foods: soups and stews tend to be easiest to digest. If you want to eat especially medicinally:**
- Kindle your digestion with spices like fresh ginger, black pepper, cardamom, cumin, coriander, nutmeg, cinnamon, turmeric, mustard seed. Almost any spice you like will help with digestion: basil, oregano, thyme, marjoram, dill
- Fresh ginger tea (a teaspoon grated, steeped 5 minutes) with meals
- Steamed or sauteed vegetables
- Scallion, onion, garlic
- Protein from beans (especially aduki beans, mung beans, lentils, kidney beans)
- Antibiotic-free lean meats, poultry, fish in small amounts
- Pumpkin, winter squashes, turnip, kohlrabi, radish
- Cooked grains like basmati rice, amaranth, millet, (barley, rye if not avoiding gluten) oats
- Cooked greens: chard, kale, spinach, collards, arugala
- mushrooms, celery, cabbage, sprouts, seaweed
- A few forkfuls of fermented vegetables daily (sauerkraut, kimchi)
- Bone broth
- Move for at least 20 minutes a day
- **Focus on when and how you eat: finish eating by 7pm** (at least 3 hours before bed). Allow at least **12.5 hours between dinner and breakfast**. Eat **meals** rather than grazing to give your digestive system time to rest. **Relax** with a few deep slow breaths to downshift into “rest-and-digest” mode, **chew** your food to stimulate digestive enzyme production, and **avoid working or studying** (“digesting” information) while you eat. Massage your belly for a few minutes after eating.
- **For more info, listen to** episode 224 of my podcast, A Healthy Curiosity, wherever you get your podcasts, or <https://brodiewelch.com/episode-224-dampness-digestion-master-class>.

