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RICE PORRIDGE

BACKGROUND:

Porridge is used frequently in Chinese medicine as a form of diet therapy as a means for keeping the body strong and healthy by providing highly absorbable basic nutrition with the ability to combine herbs to treat specific illnesses. Ancient Chinese doctors attached great importance to diet-therapy, believing it to be the first step that should be taken in the process of treating disease. To create porridge, rice or millet are cooked together with the appropriate amounts of other foods, herbal medicines, and water into a semi-fluid matter. They have a wide range of applications and are suitable for patients of all ages and many types of illness. Rice is tonifying to the digest tract, prevents the stomach from having that empty/gnawing feeling and is an ideal food to restore people to health.

Although more nutrients are available from raw food, it may be that fewer of these nutrients are absorbed compared with lightly cooked food. According to Chinese medicine, cooked food strengthens digestion, absorption and transportation of nutrients. Cooked food supplies better nutrition to the nervous system and hormonal/glandular centers. Without this nourishment, one's consciousness can become more easily unbalanced, the person will be less peaceful and therefore find greater difficulty in focusing on one's true nature.

When the Spleen and Stomach fail to perform their functions, it causes stagnation of food. This is usually due to poor diet, overeating of rich, fatty foods or raw and cold foods resulting in the malfunction of the Spleen and Stomach and failure to digest and absorb. Symptoms are marked by lethargy, loss of appetite, fullness in the abdomen, belching, nausea, undigested food in loose stools, a pale scalloped tongue with white or greasy coating and a slow and weak pulse. Dietary therapy should be directed at replenishing Qi and reinforcing the Spleen, assisting digestion and dissolving food stagnation. It is desirable for these patients to have soft, liquid foods that are easy to digest, such as porridge. Foods should be added that assist digestion and dissolve stagnation, such as Chinese food grade herbs and simple vegetables. Therapeutic properties may be added to the porridge by cooking appropriate vegetables, grains, herbs or meats in with the rice water.

DIRECTIONS:

Add 1 bag of herbs to 5 cups of water in a large pot. Let the herbs sit in the water for 30 minutes. Afterwards, bring the water to a boil and simmer for 30 minutes. Next add 1 cup of rice and continue simmering for at least an hour. Be mindful of the pot that the water (starch) does not boil over). You will likely need to add more water to keep the consistency somewhere between oatmeal and soup. It is better to use too much water than too little, and it is said that the longer it cooks the more powerful it becomes, however 1 hour will suffice if time does not permit longer amounts.

If desired, add the vegetables after at least an hour of simmering. The vegetables should cook for 30 – 40 minutes. Zucchini, string beans and celery make good additions.

Please eat _____ cup, _____ times a day. Remember to store porridge in the refrigerator.