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METABOLIC

Weight management and excess

Chinese dietetics protocol sheet

There is no plate that makes you lose weight: it is the terrain that decides where the bowl of rice goes. Seven ways of putting on weight, seven strategies. Spotting yours is already half the journey.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONDITION

Weight management and excess

In Chinese medicine, weight is not a question of calories but of transformation. What we eat becomes Qi and Blood when the Spleen works well, Dampness and Phlegm when it tires. The body that stores is first a body that can no longer transform: the causes are multiple (deficiency, cold, stagnation, heat), and each calls for a different strategy. This is why uniform diets fail in series: they treat a symptom, never the terrain. Being overweight is rarely a problem of excess to eliminate; it is the sign of a metabolism asking to be re-read.

SUGGESTIVE SIGNS

- Progressive or fluctuating weight gain, often resistant to diets
- Fatigue, heaviness of the body, sleepiness after meals
- Sugar cravings or recurrent hunger pangs, or conversely a deadened appetite
- Bloating, irregular bowel movements, a feeling of 'digesting badly'
- Water retention, swelling of the face or legs
- Difficulty losing weight despite repeated efforts

TONGUE & PULSE

Variable according to the pattern: a pale tongue marked by teeth with a weak pulse in Spleen deficiency; a thick greasy white coating with a slippery pulse in Phlegm; a red tongue with a yellow coating and a rapid pulse in Heat; a wiry pulse in Liver stagnation; a deep slow pulse in Yang deficiency. Refer to the differential.

FAVOURABLE TERRAIN

The underlying terrain is almost always mixed: a Spleen that has been tiring for years, accumulated Phlegm, a Liver bristling from the pace of life. This is not an illness to cure, it is a mode of functioning to reorient.

THE TCM DIFFERENTIAL

Which pattern applies?

Weight gain never has a single cause. Chinese medicine distinguishes at least seven patterns, which often combine. Each calls for a different dietary strategy: what frees one can aggravate another.

TCM PATTERN	DISTINCTIVE SIGNS	TONGUE & PULSE	QUICK SIGNAL
Spleen Qi deficiency, the Dampness factory	Soft, puffy body, fatigue after meals, loose stools, sugar cravings, weight gain 'without eating much'	Pale tongue marked by teeth, weak and soft pulse	***Tiredness after eating + sugar***
Accumulated Phlegm-Dampness	Body heaviness, foggy-headed feeling, snoring, morning hoarseness, thick greasy tongue coating	Pale or normal tongue, thick greasy white coating, slippery pulse	***Heavy body + mental fog***
Stomach Heat, insatiable hunger	Voracious appetite, never full, thirst, sticky mouth, constipation, red complexion, eats fast and a lot	Red tongue, dry yellow coating, rapid strong pulse	***Always hungry + eats fast***
Liver Qi stagnation, the weight of emotions	Weight fluctuating with stress, evening cravings, chest oppression, sighing, irritability, restriction-binge alternation	Normal tongue or red edges, wiry pulse	***Eats under tension + sighs***
Spleen-Kidney Yang deficiency, the fading ember	Fragility under diets, weight stuck despite restriction, cold extremities, water retention, tired lower back, low libido	Pale, moist, swollen tongue, deep slow pulse	***Cold + retention + failed diets***
Blood stasis and knotted Phlegm, the weight that resists	Old, fixed overweight, hard abdominal fat, dull or purplish complexion, varicose veins, associated metabolic syndrome	Purplish tongue or purplish spots, rough or wiry pulse	***Weight fixed for years + hard belly***
Dampness-Heat, the fat that heats	Greasy or acne-prone skin, abundant sweating, marked body odour, thirst without much desire to drink, heaviness with a feeling of heat	Red or normal tongue, greasy yellow coating, slippery rapid pulse	***Greasy skin + hot heaviness***

In consultation, patterns almost always combine. The Liver Stagnation + Phlegm-Dampness duo is the most common (Wood blocking Earth). The Yang Deficiency + Phlegm association characterises the elderly or post-menopausal terrain. The triple Spleen-Liver-Kidney terrain corresponds to full metabolic syndrome. Point of vigilance: chronic restriction aggravates Spleen deficiency and produces the opposite of the intended effect. Look for the dominant pattern of the moment, not a single pattern for life. Special case: acute food stagnation (shi ji, 食积), after festive meals or children's excessive snacking, is an acute pattern distinct from chronic overweight; it is treated with daikon, hawthorn and temporary lightness, not by this sheet.

DIETARY PLANS

One plan per pattern

1 Spleen Qi deficiency, the Dampness factory · *pí xū bú yùn (脾虚不运)*

The most common pattern of overweight. The Spleen transforms food into Qi and Blood; when it tires (irregular meals, looping thoughts, too much raw food, sedentary habits), it produces Dampness instead of energy. The person gains weight 'without eating much' because the problem is not quantity but transformation. Strategy: nourish the Spleen regularly and warmly, do not deprive it.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Job's Tears	Cool	Sweet	Drains Dampness gently without exhausting the Spleen, lightens the body	*The ancient gruel: 'removes dampness swellings, a work surpassing all remedies' (Yin Shi Xu Zhi). 30 g in a morning congee, with a little ginger to offset its coolness.*
Millet	Cool	Sweet, Salty	Strengthens the Spleen without weighing it down, satisfies durably	*The cereal of northern China, the traditional base of strengthening gruels. In a savoury porridge with mushrooms.*
Barley	Warm	Sweet	Strengthens the Spleen, eases digestion of accumulations	*Barley malt (mai ya) is the classic that 'digests grain accumulations'. Pearl barley soup, infusion of roasted seeds.*
Potato	Cool	Sweet	Nourishes centre Qi without generating Dampness, saturates effectively	*The most satiating food on the satiety index (Holt, 1995): boiled potato calms hunger far better than bread. Steamed or boiled, never fried.*
Pumpkin	Warm	Sweet	Strengthens the Spleen and the centre, gently satisfies	*The sweetness that truly nourishes: unlike empty sugar, pumpkin satisfies and regulates sweet cravings.*
Adzuki	Neutral	Sweet, Sour	Drains Dampness, supports the centre	*The red bean of Chinese detox gruels: both tonifying and draining, a rare double action.*
Chicken	Warm	Sweet	Tones Qi and Blood, satisfies through protein	*In broth or poached, not dry-roasted or breaded. Protein supports the centre without gumming it up.*
Mandarin (peel)	Warm	Bitter, Pungent	Dries Dampness, moves centre Qi	*The chenpi of the pharmacy: 'eating it makes food descend and opens phlegm' (Shiliao Bencao). A dried peel in soups and broths.*
Button Mushroom	Cool	Sweet	Strengthens the Spleen, satisfies through umami	*Umami fools hunger: a plate of mushrooms gives the feeling of a hearty meal.*
Oats	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Tones the Spleen, satiating fibres	*Flakes in savoury porridge rather than sweet granola: oats in sweet form turn into Phlegm.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Refined sugars and pastries	Cold	Empty sugar is the first Phlegm maker: it weakens the Spleen it claims to revive. The glycaemic peak relaunches hunger 90 minutes later.
Raw vegetables and cold juices in excess	Cold	Raw food demands a digestive fire this terrain no longer has. An iced salad as a starter to a heavy meal worsens the problem it claims to solve.
Excess fatty dairy	Variable	Aged cheeses, creams and butter directly generate Dampness-Phlegm. Fresh yoghurt stays tolerated in reasonable amounts.

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Irregular meals and snacking	Variable	Skipping breakfast then compensating in the evening keeps the Spleen exhausted. Snacking never leaves time to transform.
Sugary drinks	Cold	Liquid calories trigger no satiety: the body does not count them. Sodas, fruit juices, energy drinks (Malik, Am J Clin Nutr 2013).

GOLDEN RULE

Nourish the Spleen warmly and regularly, never starve it: weight will come back down when transformation resumes, not when calories fall.

MODERN NUTRITION

This pattern corresponds to the 'low energy density' profile: the strategy is to replace empty calories with foods that genuinely satisfy. Boiled potato tops the satiety index (Holt, Eur J Clin Nutr 1995), 3 times more satiating than white bread. Mozaffarian's cohorts show that wholegrains, yoghurt, vegetables and nuts protect against long-term weight gain, while sodas, crisps and refined starches accelerate it (N Engl J Med 2011).

2 Accumulated Phlegm-Dampness · *tán shī nèi shèng (痰湿内盛)*

Stagnant Dampness thickens into Phlegm: the body thickens, the head clouds over, the nose blocks at night, the palate coats with a greasy film. This is the 'heavy' overweight of northern China and of our Western diets: processed foods, dairy, sugar, fried food, beer. Strategy: move and drain, with foods that melt Phlegm (seaweed, daikon, onion) and cooking methods that do not add to it.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Kelp (Kombu)	Cold	Salty	Transforms Phlegm, softens masses, brings Qi down	*The kombu of Japanese cooking: 'with prolonged use it makes you lose weight' (Shiliao Bencao): the ancients already noted that islanders who loved it did not gain weight. A square in broths and stews.*
Nori	Cold	Sweet, Salty	Transforms Phlegm, mildly draining	*A few torn leaves over dishes: the iodised saltiness that replaces greasy sauce.*
Daikon : Chinese Radish	Warm	Pungent, Sweet	Dissolves accumulations, brings Qi down, transforms Phlegm	*The daikon that 'digests' meat: in slices in soups or grated raw alongside rich dishes.*
Celery	Cool	Sweet, Bitter	Drains Dampness, soothes the Liver	*As a morning juice (the craze has a basis: celery drains without exhausting) or braised as an accompaniment.*
Corn (silk and stigma)	Neutral	Sweet	Drains Dampness through urine, decongests the liver	*Corn silk as an infusion: the Koreans' 'corn tea', a gentle daily drainage.*
Eggplant, Aubergine	Cold	Sweet	Drains Dampness, fluidifies Blood	*The vegetable sponge: it absorbs the sauce's fat rather than the body's. Steamed or grilled, not fried.*
Onion	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Moves Qi, transforms Phlegm	*Raw in small quantity or cooked in soups: the pungent that mobilises without heating.*
Cardamom	Warm	Pungent	Dries Dampness, wakes the Spleen	*One or two pods in rice or infusion: the dry pungent that pierces the fog.*
Green bean	Cold	Sweet	Drains Dampness, eases the descent of food	*Crisp steamed or quickly stir-fried: their light coolness counterbalances heavy dishes.*
Mackerel	Neutral	Sweet	Drains Dampness, nourishes without gumming up	*An oily fish that stays light: omega-3 soothes inflammation in adipose tissue.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Excess dairy	Variable	Milk, cheeses and creams directly produce Phlegm: morning mucus, white tongue. Reduce to yoghurt or remove for three weeks as a test.
Ultra-processed foods	Variable	Industrial ready meals generate +500 kcal/day of spontaneous overconsumption (Hall, Cell Metab 2019): the liquid-glue formulation is literally manufactured for it.
Fried foods and cooked fats	Variable	Burnt fat freezes Phlegm: batters, chips, butter sauces, melted cheeses. Visible fat and hidden fat add up.
Sugars and white flours	Variable	White bread, pasta and desserts maintain Dampness through insulin spikes. Whole wheat does not solve everything: density matters.
Heavy evening meals	Variable	A dense late meal has no time to transform: it settles as nightly Phlegm (snoring, pasty mouth on waking).

GOLDEN RULE

The priority is not to eat less but to eat drier: foods that drain Dampness replace those that produce it, at equal volume.

MODERN NUTRITION

This is the pattern that best matches Western epidemiology: ultra-processed foods mechanically produce overeating (Hall, Cell Metab 2019: +500 kcal/day without subjects noticing). Sugary drinks add their calories without satiety (Malik, Am J Clin Nutr 2013). The most effective strategy is not restriction but substitution: cooking for yourself, even simply, removes the main engine of modern Dampness.

3 Stomach Heat, insatiable hunger · *wèi rè zhì pí (胃热滞脾)*

The pattern of the 'big eater': voracious appetite, never full, meals swallowed in five minutes, constant thirst, hot mouth, red complexion. Stomach Heat accelerates the digestive fire and produces constant hunger that has nothing to do with greed: it is the body demanding what will put the fire out. Strategy: cool the Stomach with fresh, hydrating foods, and saturate with plant protein.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Tofu (soy cheese)	Cold	Sweet	Cools the Stomach, saturates through protein	*The natural substitute for 'I'm still hungry': in miso soup or lightly stir-fried, tofu calms Heat without exhausting.*
Bok choy (Pak choi)	Cool	Sweet	Cools the Stomach, hydrates	*The southern Chinese cabbage of southern soups: steamed or in broth, it fills without weighing down.*
Cucumber	Cold	Sweet	Rehydrates, cools the Stomach	*The most hydrating food: eaten in sticks before the meal, it begins to put the fire out.*
Spinach	Cold	Sweet	Nourishes Yin, cools the Blood	*The green leaves that satisfy through volume and their mineral sweetness: in warm salad or briefly braised.*
Kiwi	Cold	Sweet, Sour	Cools, generates fluids	*An acidic fruit that cuts cravings: acidity closes the door to appetite better than sugar does.*
Yogurt	Cool	Sweet	Cools the Stomach, generates fluids	*Natural and fresh: yoghurt calms Stomach fire and the craving for dessert at once.*
Lemon	Neutral	Sour, Sweet	Cools the Stomach, brings Qi down	*As juice on dishes or lemon water in the morning: the acid that closes appetite without punishing it.*
Vinegar	Warm	Sour, Sweet	Brings Qi down, dissolves accumulations	*Grandmothers' cider vinegar: 15 ml before a meal reduces post-meal glycaemia and hunger (Kondo, Biosci Biotechnol Biochem 2009).*
Barley	Warm	Sweet	Drains gently, fibres that satisfy durably	*Pearled barley in salad or soup: the beta-glucans that calm cravings for hours.*
Mung Bean Sprouts	Cool	Sweet	Cools the Stomach, hydrates	*Crisp in salad or briefly stir-fried: volume that fools hunger without calories.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Grilling and barbecuing	Hot	Dry, caramelised cooking adds Heat: grilled meat, golden batters, burnt crusts. Prefer steam, broth, brief braising.
Strong spices and hot dishes	Hot	Chilli, pepper, raw garlic, hot curry excite: the pungent lights the very fire that devours. Stay with fresh herbs and mild spices.
Eating fast and standing	Variable	Swallowing speed feeds the Heat: 20 minutes for satiety to arrive, 5 to double the portion without noticing.
Late, heavy meals	Variable	A dense evening meal prolongs the fire into the night: eating late objectively increases next-day hunger (Vujovic, Cell Metab 2022).
Excess salt and condiments	Variable	Salt opens appetite and causes thirst: crisps, salty dishes, industrial sauces make you eat beyond need.

GOLDEN RULE

Put the fire out before counting calories: when the Stomach cools, hunger becomes a normal signal again instead of permanent panic.

MODERN NUTRITION

The 'wolf hunger' profile has a simple physiological answer: protein and water. A trial in which subjects move to 30% protein loses 441 kcal/day of spontaneous intake without restriction (Weigle, Am J Clin Nutr 2005). Two large glasses of water before a meal increase weight loss by 44% (Dennis, Obesity 2010). And timing matters: eating late objectively increases hunger and reduces expenditure (Vujovic, Cell Metab 2022). Cider vinegar also has real effects, modest but measured (Kondo, 2009).

4 Liver Qi stagnation, the weight of emotions · *gān yù qì zhì (肝郁气滞)*

Weight that rises and falls with emotions: evening cravings after a fraught day, weekend binges, a tightening belly, sighs, irritability. The stress-blocked Liver blocks the Spleen in return: this is the Wood-Earth circle of the classics. Strategy: release Qi through aromatic herbs and circulating flavours, and set up rituals that cut the stress-food link.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Mint	Cool	Pungent	Releases Liver Qi, refreshes the head	*The 'Bo He' that unbinds: a few leaves in salad or as an infusion after a fraught day, far more effective than a packet of biscuits.*
Mandarin (peel)	Warm	Bitter, Pungent	Moves Qi, transforms Phlegm	*The chenpi that does double duty: it mobilises Liver Qi while draining the Dampness it produced.*
Fennel bulb	Neutral	Sweet, Pungent	Harmonises the centre, relaxes the diaphragm	*Raw in salad or braised: the vegetable that relaxes the solar plexus tightened by meals under tension.*
Basil (Aromatic)	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Moves Qi, soothes the Liver	*The herb that gently unblocks: a generous handful on everything; its scent alone changes tone.*
Coriander (aromatic herb)	Warm	Pungent	Frees Qi, refreshes the centre	*Fresh at the end of cooking: the green pungent that wakes without heating.*
Black radish	Cool, Neutral	Pungent, Sweet	Brings Qi down, decongests the Liver	*Grated raw or in slices: the radish that undoes the knot between the ribs after the day.*
Chicory, Frisée, Escarole	Cold	Bitter	Bitter that decongests the Liver	*The bitter salad of midday: bitterness releases what sugar has blocked.*
Vervain	Cool	Bitter	Soothes the Liver, calms tensions	*The evening infusion that replaces the TV-and-snacks ritual: the ritual that says 'the day is over'.*
Lemon	Neutral	Sour, Sweet	Bitter-acid that mobilises Qi	*As juice in water or on dishes: the flavour that opens the closed diaphragm.*
Turmeric	Warm	Bitter, Pungent	Moves Qi and Blood	*The rhizome that gently unblocks: in soups or rice, with a little fat and pepper to absorb it.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Eating under tension	Variable	A meal swallowed while answering messages freezes Qi: stress blocks digestion and triggers repair cravings afterwards.
The fat-sugar duo of comfort	Variable	Biscuits, pastries, crisps: fat+sugar is the most addictive combination. Binging does not release Qi, it drives it deeper.
Standing, rushed or skipped meals	Variable	The Spleen hates urgency: a 10-minute meal on the move is not digested, it is endured. The evening then collapses into cravings.
Excess stimulants	Variable	Coffee, strong tea, energy drinks tighten Qi further: the stimulant that wakes you in the morning strains the Liver in the afternoon.
Restriction-binge alternation	Variable	The 'I restrict, I binge' cycle freezes Qi in an exhausting back-and-forth. Gentle regularity frees more than severe discipline.

GOLDEN RULE

Release Qi through rituals and aromatic herbs, not willpower: the Liver frees itself when it feels less attacked, not when it is held tighter.

MODERN NUTRITION

The stress-food circle has a measurable hormonal basis: sleep restriction raises ghrelin and makes you lose lean mass instead of fat when dieting (Nedeltcheva, Ann Intern Med 2010). The real lever is not resisting the binge but cutting the stress→food chain: seated, unhurried meals, a 10-minute walk after eating, replacing the cupboard ritual with the herbal-tea ritual.

5 Spleen-Kidney Yang deficiency, the fading ember · *pí shèn yáng xū (脾肾阳虚)*

The pattern of the 'slow metabolism': cold hands and feet, water retention, deep fatigue, weight gain resistant to every diet, worse in winter or at the menopause. Digestive fire and metabolic fire have both dropped. Chronic restriction aggravates this pattern: it extinguishes a fire that is already weak. Strategy: warm gently and durably, without excess, through warm foods and gentle movement.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Oats	Warm	Sweet, Salty	Tones Qi, warms the centre	*The savoury morning porridge: the base that relights the ember without smothering it. Add ginger or cinnamon.*
Cinnamon	Hot	Pungent, Sweet	Relights the Mingmen fire, warms the centre	*The spice of the cold subject: in porridge, coffee, compote. The only spice that genuinely helps this pattern.*
Dried Ginger	Warm	Pungent	Warms the centre, transforms Dampness	*Dried ginger (gan jiang) is more yang than fresh: in light infusion or in broths.*
Prawn	Warm	Sweet	Tones Yang without greasing	*The light yang protein: a few stir-fried or souped prawns, far better suited than red meat.*
Trout	Warm	Sweet	Tones Qi, warms without greasing	*A fish that warms: steamed or poached, not breaded or fried.*
Chicken	Warm	Sweet	Tones Qi and Blood	*In broth with ginger: the comfort that genuinely supports the fire.*
Walnut	Neutral	Sweet	Tones the Kidney, nourishes Essence	*Cohorts show walnuts protect against weight gain (Mozaffarian, NEJM 2011): a handful a day, not a handful an hour.*
Pistachio	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Tones the Kidney, gently warms	*The warm oleaginous seed: in a structured snack, not endless grazing.*
Millet	Cool	Sweet, Salty	Tones the centre, supports the Kidney	*The cereal that tones two terrains at once: savoury morning gruel, with a little ginger to offset its coolness.*
Fennel (seed)	Neutral	Pungent	Harmonises the centre, chases cold	*Seeds to chew at the end of a meal: the Indian tradition that brings the meal down while warming.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Prolonged restrictive diets	Variable	Chronic restriction aggravates Yang deficiency: each new diet extinguishes the ember a little more. Weight rarely comes down, exhaustion always grows.
Cold and raw foods	Cold	Salads, iced juices, yoghurts straight from the fridge: cold directly extinguishes the fire that must be relit.
Cold and iced drinks	Cold	Iced water during meals asks the centre to produce heat it no longer has. Tempered or warm water suffices.
Excess cold dairy	Cold	Yoghurts, milks, ice cream: double cold (cold nature + cold temperature) extinguishes the ember twice.
Too-rich evening meals	Variable	The fire is lowest in the evening: a heavy late meal lacks the means to transform and settles as Dampness.

GOLDEN RULE

Warm the ember rather than cut the wood: sufficient, warm caloric intake does more for this weight than restriction, which extinguishes the little fire that remains.

MODERN NUTRITION

This is the profile that suffers most from the 'diet that destroys the diet': chronic restriction lowers basal metabolism (metabolic adaptation), making each new attempt less effective. DiRECT data nonetheless show weight loss remains possible even in severe cases (Lancet 2018: losing 10-15 kg puts diabetes into remission in nearly one subject in two). The DPP proves a lifestyle change beats metformin by 58% in diabetes prevention (NEJM 2002). The solution lies in metabolic warming (movement, hot meals, sufficient protein), not deprivation.

6 Blood stasis and knotted Phlegm, the weight that resists · *tán yū hù jié (痰瘀互结)*

Old, established overweight: hard abdominal fat that no longer moves, dull or purplish complexion, often associated with metabolic syndrome (blood pressure, triglycerides, glycaemia). Phlegm has knotted onto stasis: the problem is no longer only metabolic, it is circulatory. Strategy: move Blood and Phlegm together, with foods that untie (daikon, hawthorn, onion) and structures that impose movement.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Daikon : Chinese Radish	Warm	Pungent, Sweet	Brings Qi down, dissolves accumulations, fluidifies Blood	*The daikon of meat soups: it 'digests' fats and undoes accumulations. In slices in broths.*
Eggplant, Aubergine	Cold	Sweet	Fluidifies Blood, drains Dampness	*The anti-stasis food par excellence: steamed or oven-grilled, not fried (it would drink the oil).*
Cinnamon	Hot	Pungent, Sweet	Warms and moves Blood	*The spice that circulates: in broths or compotes, it moves without irritating.*
Onion	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Moves Qi and Blood	*Cooked in dishes or raw in small quantity: the daily ally of fluidity.*
Prawn	Warm	Sweet	Moves Blood, lightly tones	*The protein that moves: briefly stir-fried or in soups; its gentle circulation suits this pattern.*
Adzuki	Neutral	Sweet, Sour	Drains Dampness, supports Blood	*The bean that does double duty Phlegm+stasis: boiled with a little mandarin peel.*
Vinegar	Warm	Sour, Sweet	Dissolves accumulations, fluidifies Blood	*The degreasing vinegar: the classic use of sour sauces on rich meats. 15 ml before the meal.*
Papaya	Neutral	Sweet	Dissolves accumulations, fluidifies	*Papain digests proteins and unties: as dessert or in salad, far more than an exotic fruit.*
Basil (Aromatic)	Warm	Sweet, Pungent	Moves Qi and Blood	*The herb that gently circulates: in every dish, its scent alone sets things moving.*
Vervain	Cool	Bitter	Decongests, soothes, drains	*The infusion that unties: in the evening, it moves what the day froze.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Prolonged sedentary behaviour	Variable	Blood stagnates when the body does not move: walking 10 minutes after each meal circulates more than three gym sessions on Sunday.
Cured meats and cooked fats	Variable	Sausages, pates, fried foods: cooked and processed fats thicken Blood and knot Phlegm.
Excess fast sugars	Variable	Fast sugar raises triglycerides and thickens Blood: sodas, desserts, pastries.
Excess salt	Variable	Salt retains water and worsens vascular congestion: ready meals, cheeses, bread.
Ultra-processed foods	Variable	Emulsifiers and modified fats knot the terrain: stasis loves industrial food.

GOLDEN RULE

Weight that resists answers to circulation, not restriction: move, untie, fluidify, and accept that it takes the time it took to install itself.

MODERN NUTRITION

This is the metabolic syndrome pattern: visceral fat, triglycerides, blood pressure, insulin resistance. Structured protocols succeed more than vague diets: intermittent fasting shows modest but real effects (umbrella review Patikorn, JAMA Netw Open 2021), and comparing famous diets shows none is superior at 12 months (Johnston, JAMA 2014). The decisive variable is adherence: a followed protocol beats a perfect one.

7 Dampness-Heat, the fat that heats · *shī rè nèi yùn (湿热内蕴)*

The 'fat and hot' overweight: greasy skin, acne or folliculitis, abundant sweating, marked body odour, thirst without much desire to drink, yellow greasy coating. Dampness and Heat feed each other: fatty, heating foods (grills, spices, alcohol) maintain the fire that maintains the dampness. Strategy: clarify Heat while draining Dampness, through fresh, bitter and aromatic foods.

FOOD	NATURE	FLAVOUR	ACTION	PRACTICAL ADVICE
Job's Tears	Cool	Sweet	Drains Dampness, clarifies Heat	*The only food that does both: drainage + gentle coolness. In gruel or summer soup.*
Buckwheat	Cold	Sweet	Clarifies Dampness-Heat, mildly bitter	*The bitter-cold cereal of the mountains: in galettes or kasha, it clarifies without exhausting.*
Pineapple	Neutral	Sweet, Sour	Drains Dampness, bromelain digests proteins	*The enzyme that helps: fresh as dessert or in salads, not as juice (sugar counteracts the action).*
Cucumber	Cold	Sweet	Rehydrates, clarifies Heat	*The hydrating food for the fat body: raw or in cold soup, it cools the terrain.*
Cauliflower	Neutral	Sweet, Bitter	Drains Dampness, mildly clarifying	*The flower vegetable that replaces starches: cauliflower rice, mash, steamed.*
Black radish	Cool, Neutral	Pungent, Sweet	Clarifies Dampness-Heat, brings Qi down	*The radish for the congested liver: grated or in slices, its pungent bite cleanses the terrain.*
Eggplant, Aubergine	Cold	Sweet	Drains Dampness-Heat, fluidifies	*The sponge that absorbs toxins: steamed or oven-grilled.*
Vervain	Cool	Bitter	Bitter that clarifies and soothes	*The fresh evening infusion: bitterness that puts out the day's fire.*
Chicory, Frisée, Escarole	Cold	Bitter	Bitter that decongests and clarifies	*The daily bitter salad: bitterness that cleanses the liver and clarifies the complexion.*
Tea	Cool	Bitter	Clarifies Heat, lightly drains	*Green tea, not black: the effect is modest in meta-analysis (Hursel, Int J Obes 2009), but the tradition is constant: the drink of the fat-hot body.*

TO LIMIT	NATURE	REASON
Grilling, barbecuing and frying	Hot	Dry heat maintains the fire that maintains the dampness: grilled meats, chips, fatty dishes. Fat that heats is this terrain's food.
Strong spices and spicy dishes	Hot	Chilli, curry, pepper: the pungent that excites an already too-vivid fire.
Fermented and matured cheeses	Warm	Roquefort, camembert, parmesan: fermentation adds Heat to the dairy's Dampness.
Sugars and desserts	Variable	Sugar maintains the inflammation that maintains the Heat: greasy skin and acne often respond better to cut sugar than to creams.
Excess oil and sauces	Variable	Even olive oil in excess: pure fat maintains Dampness. Industrial sauces cumulate fat+sugar+salt.

GOLDEN RULE

Cool and dry at the same time: bitter, fresh foods cut the fat-hot circuit that grills and cheeses keep rekindling.

MODERN NUTRITION

Green tea has a real but modest effect on weight (meta-analysis Hursel, Int J Obes 2009: about -1.3 kg across studies): tradition uses it as support, not solution. The most effective diet for this terrain is not a 'miracle' diet but reducing fat-hot intakes: data on sugary drinks (Malik, Am J Clin Nutr 2013) and ultra-processed foods (Hall, Cell Metab 2019) apply here with double force.

CROSS-CUTTING ADVICE

Valid whatever the pattern

Whatever the dominant pattern, a few principles run through every terrain. They do not replace the pattern's strategy, they make it possible: they are the rails on which the strategy runs.

- Eat seated, chew, take 20 minutes: satiety needs time to arrive, swallowing speed short-circuits it.
- Structure meals: a rich lunch and a light, early dinner. Eating late increases next-day hunger and reduces expenditure (Vujovic, Cell Metab 2022).
- Two large glasses of water before the meal: simple, measured, effective (Dennis, Obesity 2010: +44% weight loss).
- A portion of protein at every meal: it calms hunger more durably than any other nutrient (Weigle, Am J Clin Nutr 2005).
- Walk 10 minutes after the meal: the movement that transforms instead of storing. Not the marathon, regularity.
- Cook for yourself, even simply: removing ultra-processed food removes the engine of overeating (Hall, Cell Metab 2019).
- Measure the waistline, not the weight: abdominal fat is the metabolic marker that counts, not kilos on the scale.
- Sleep: sleep restriction sabotages fat loss and increases hunger (Nedeltcheva, Ann Intern Med 2010). The diet starts in bed.

IN THE KITCHEN

Adapted recipes

Everyday, French staples

Azuki bean salad, crunchy vegetables and sesame vinaigrette — France

Draining azuki + tangy vinegar: the plate that moves Dampness and Blood at once, with the volume that satisfies.

Apple compote with cinnamon — France/Europe

Satiating apple + yang cinnamon: the dessert that warms the centre and closes cravings without added sugar.

Green beans stir-fried with garlic and dill — Greece/Mediterranean

The green that drains Dampness + garlic that moves: the perfect accompaniment for this terrain's proteins.

Cucumber, yoghurt and basil salad — Middle East/Mediterranean

Coolness + light protein: the duo that puts out Stomach fire and satisfies without weighing down.

Summer vegetable aspic — France

Fresh, light vegetable volume: the starter that fills half the plate before the main dish.

Cold oat salad with grilled vegetables — Greece

Whole oats + vegetables: the wholegrain that satisfies for hours without producing Phlegm.

World, by pattern

Savory oat congee with mushrooms and ginger — China

The morning gruel for the tired Spleen: hot, sweet, satisfying, the base of pattern 1 (Spleen Qi deficiency).

Cold cucumber and yoghurt soup with wild celery — Turkey

The cold duo that puts out Stomach fire: the summer soup for pattern 3 (Stomach Heat).

Vegetable curry with dill — India

Spices that gently warm + vegetables: the stew for pattern 5 (Yang deficiency), yang without heaviness.

Green curry of vegetables and seaweed — Thailand

Green vegetables + seaweed that clarify: the dish for pattern 7 (Dampness-Heat), bitter and fresh.

Miso soup with wakame and tofu — Japan

Seaweed that dissolves Phlegm + tofu that cools: the soup for pattern 2 (Phlegm-Dampness), light and complete.

Canh Chua Ca: sweet-sour fish soup with dill — Vietnam

Sweet-sour that releases Liver Qi: the dish for pattern 4 (Liver Qi stagnation), light and aromatic.

Fish soup with black mushrooms and lemongrass — Thailand

Mushrooms that move + lemongrass that releases: the soup for pattern 6 (Blood stasis), tangy and fluid.

Sesame-sautéed chard with soy sauce (chard ohitashi) — Japan

The green bitterness that clarifies Dampness-Heat: the accompaniment for pattern 7, simple and cleansing.

PRACTICAL

Cooking & hygiene tips

1. The morning congee: rice or millet + abundant water, simmered 45 minutes. The base that nourishes the Spleen without tiring it. Add ginger, mushrooms or vegetables according to the pattern.
2. The evening miso soup: the lightest dinner that is still complete. Seaweed, tofu, mushrooms: drainage + satiety + minerality.
3. Vinegar before the meal: 15 ml of cider vinegar diluted in a large glass of water. Peasant tradition and clinical trial agree (Kondo, 2009).
4. Steamed potato: cold the next day in salad, it resists starch and satisfies durably. The surprise of the satiety index.
5. The soup batch: Sunday, three different vegetable soups. The week of light dinners organises itself.
6. Mushrooms as substitute: chopped or sliced, they replace meat in half of dishes without satiety suffering (umami).
7. Cucumber as appetiser: eaten raw before the meal, it begins to put out Stomach fire and reduces the first bite.
8. The evening infusion that replaces snacking: verbena, mint or lemon balm. The ritual that says 'the day is over' cuts the sofa-cupboard link.

THROUGH THE YEAR

Seasonal advice

Spring

Liver Qi wakes and the weight of emotions stirs: green the plate (mint, coriander, fennel), go out, do not lock Qi into March restrictions.

Summer

External Heat feeds internal Heat: cold soups, cucumber, watermelon, raw vegetables (except the Yang-deficiency pattern, which stays on warm). The season of Heat and Dampness-Heat patterns.

Autumn

The light drops and cravings rise: broths, stews, gently roasted vegetables. The body prepares for winter: support the Spleen rather than punish it.

Winter

Yang burrows and metabolism slows: hot soups, cinnamon, ginger, long stews. The worst time for restrictive diets (Yang deficiency worsens). Move more, eat less is wrong: move more, do not eat less.

NOTES FOR THE PRACTITIONER

- This document is a dietary memo for health professionals. It replaces neither medical advice nor individualised nutritional follow-up. Any rapid or unexplained weight gain deserves medical evaluation (thyroid, cortisol, medication, sleep apnoea).
- MTC patterns do not apply to eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, binge eating): these conditions require specific support where dietetics alone is insufficient and can harm.
- Before targeting weight, check secondary causes: hypothyroidism, corticosteroid therapy, antidepressants, insulin therapy, sleep apnoea, recent menopause. This sheet works the terrain, not the medical cause.
- Hawthorn (shan zha), lotus leaf (he ye) and konjac are major classics of the tradition for weight gain and accumulations; they do not appear here because they belong to pharmacopoeia or specific food integration, not the everyday French meal. Their corpus sheets exist and can be consulted separately.
- No named diet beats the others at 12 months (meta-analysis Johnston, JAMA 2014; comparison of 14 programmes, BMJ 2020). What makes the difference is not the chosen protocol but food quality and duration of adherence: this sheet gives the terrain, adherence does the rest.
- Waistline and energy are better progress indicators than weight alone: abdominal fat and metabolism respond before kilos do.

To go further: the "MTC differential diagnosis of overweight: identifying the dominant terrain", "Tan-Yin accumulation: Dampness-Phlegm and weight gain in MTC", "Kidney Yang deficiency and slow metabolism: the fundamental fire goes out", "Chrononutrition and circadian rhythms: when you eat counts as much as what you eat", and "Frequent errors and absolute contraindications in MTC metabolic dietetics" courses at the Yin Shi Academy (formation.yinshi.app).

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Professional document to hand out or adapt in consultation.