

TCM Hydration Insights: The 'ice water' debate



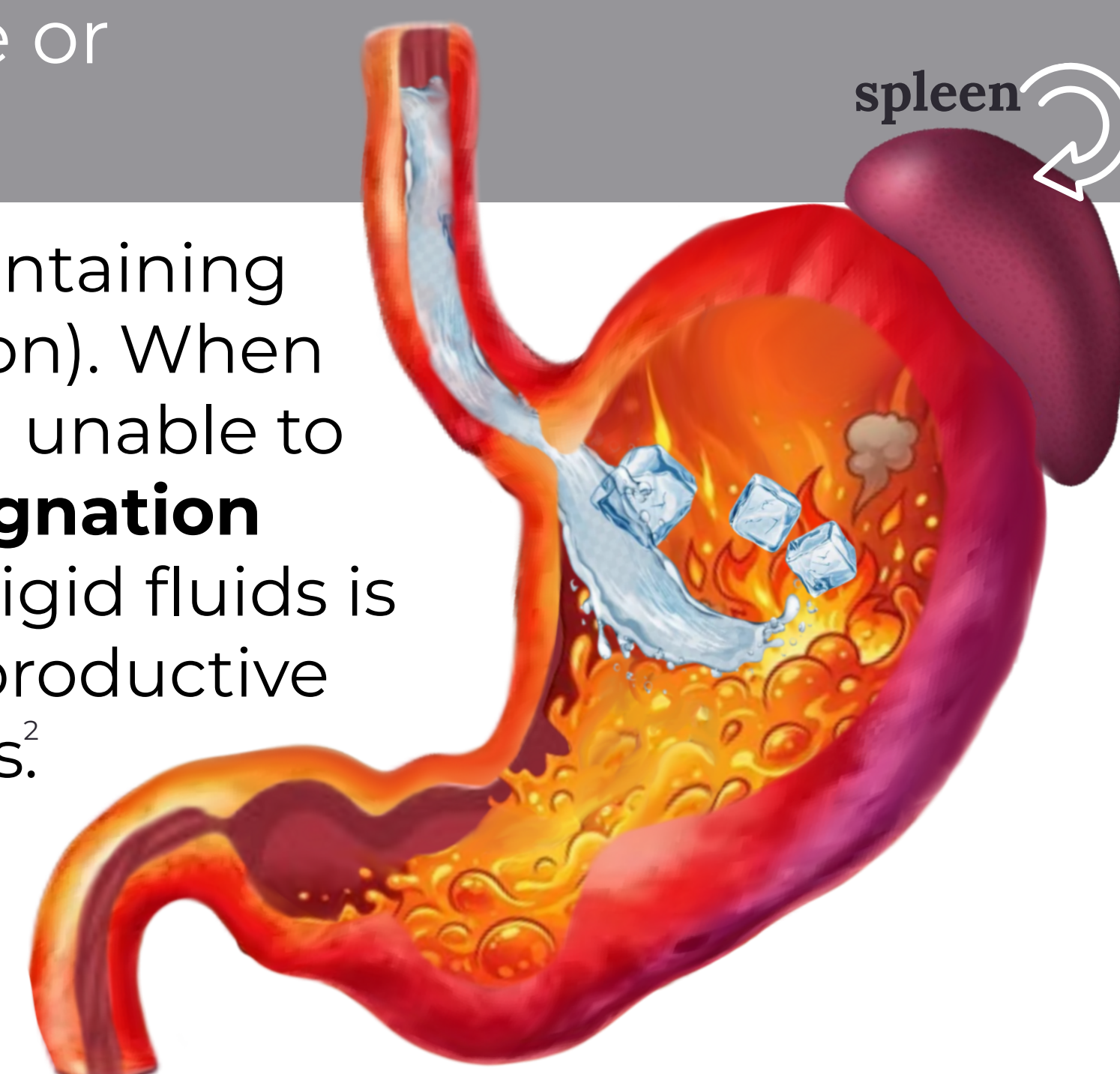
Why your body might prefer **warm water**, and the potential '**DAMPNESS**' patterns associated with **cold water ingestion**.

TCM perspective: Skip the Ice!



Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has long advised against ice water, cautioning that **cold temperatures 'extinguish digestive fire' and deplete Spleen Qi**, leading to stagnation and poor absorption. While current biomedical science is more mixed, showing potential short-term gains such a rapid reduction in core temperature¹; there is also evidence that ice water ingestion **temporarily constricts local blood flow** and **delays gastric emptying**². This temporary hypothermic state forces the stomach to expend metabolic energy on thermoregulation rather than digestion, grounding TCM's foundational basis for the consumption of room-temperature or warm fluids to optimize digestive efficiency.

In TCM the **spleen** is the principal digestive organ responsible for maintaining **transformation & transportation** (essential for circulation & absorption). When overwhelmed by factors such as **overthinking, humidity or cold**, and unable to perform effectively or efficiently, the resultant **accumulation and stagnation** may lead to '**dampness**'. Consequently, shocking the stomach with frigid fluids is like throwing a wet blanket onto a campfire. This potentially counterproductive action could have unbeknownst effects or possibly long-term impacts.²



Symptoms of 'dampness'...

- physical **heaviness**
- **mental fatigue** or 'brain fog'
- **sluggishness**
- **digestive issues** (i.e., bloating & loose stools)
- **fluid retention**

✓ **Opt for room-temperature or warm water** to support digestion efficiency.

TCM tip: Acupressure for Clearing Dampness

In TCM, an acupuncture point "**Yin Mound Spring**" (**Spleen 9**) located in the depression on the inside edge of the shin bone below the corner of the knee is an essential tool in resolving dampness.

Research shows that acupressure stimulation of Spleen 9 is a safe and accessible option to help reduce swelling and inflammation.³ Clinically it is frequently utilized in support of lymphatic drainage and to reduce symptoms of peripheral edema or fluid retention.



✓ locate spleen 9, **press firmly & massage** in small circles for **1-2 mins**.

**Note: This area might be tender, especially if there are signs of dampness present; practice with care & consideration.*

Sources: 1. Taghizadeh-Hesary, F. Is Chronic Ice Water Ingestion a Risk Factor for Gastric Cancer Development? An Evidence-Based Hypothesis Focusing on East Asian Populations. *Oncology and Therapy*. 12, 629-646 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40487-024-00299-y> 2. Maley, M. J., Minett, G. M., Bach, A. J. E., Zietek, S. A., Stewart, K. L., & Stewart, I. B. (2018). Internal and external cooling methods and their effect on body temperature, thermal perception and dexterity. *PLoS ONE*, 13(1), e0191416. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0191416> 3. Chen, S., Leung, N. N., Cheng, H., Wu, M., Cheung, D. S., Ruan, J., Qin, J., Ren, G., & Yeung, W. (2025). Acceptability of self-administered acupressure for knee osteoarthritis in middle-aged and older adults: A mixed-method secondary analysis. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 89, 103130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2025.103130>

Looking for more support in resolving symptoms of dampness? Acupuncture is clinically proven to support nervous system modulation & enhance function to provide symptom relief, Contact your local Acupuncturist or TCMP to experience benefits such as improved digestion or increased energy levels.

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