Blood deficiency is common in our modern, stressful world and this can lead to many symptoms. Blood in Chinese medicine is very important and has many functions. It carries nutrients, oxygen, energy, and moisture to every cell in the body. Blood nourishes the mind and is necessary for thinking, remembering, and concentrating. It nourishes the skin, hair, nails, muscles, and tendons. It helps keep us rooted and grounded and helps us in our ability to sleep.

In Chinese medicine, the function of digesting and transforming food into blood is attributed primarily to the Spleen (including the stomach and pancreas). The energy from oxygen collected in the lungs is combined with the energy from food transformed in the Spleen and blood is formed. Blood is stored in the Liver, especially at night and is released when we wake up in the morning and when we need more blood. Thus these organs are important in maintaining the balance of blood in the body.

Possible Causes of Blood Deficiency

Diet and habits around eating-
Not enough blood building foods, too many cold or damp foods that slow down blood production in the Spleen, and eating while under stress, or eating too fast can affect the Spleen's ability to make blood.

Worry, anxiety, or overthinking-
The Spleen, the primary organ of blood production, is affected by these states and can decrease its ability to transform food into blood.

Excessive work-
Both physical and mental work consume Qi and blood and over work can lead to both Qi and blood deficiency.

Strong Emotions-
Strong emotions, when held in, tend to stagnate the Liver. This can cause the Liver to supply less energy to the Spleen which then may make less blood.

Blood loss-
Heavy menstruation, child birth, or internal or external bleeding can lead to blood deficiency.
What is Blood Deficiency and What Can I do About it?

Poor diet, lack of proper nutrition, and digestion problems can lead to blood deficiency.

Foods and Supplements That Can Help Build Blood

- B12
- Beans
- Beef
- Beets
- Brown rice
- Carrots
- Chicken
- Eggs

Iron (take with vitamin C to help absorption)
- Leafy greens
- Liver/pate
- Nutritional yeast
- Oatmeal
- Pumpkin
- Quinoa
- Sea vegetables
- Seeds and nuts
- Spirulina / blue green algae
- Sweet potato

Foods to Avoid or Take in Moderation to Help Support Your Liver and Spleen in Order to Support the Blood

- Alcohol
- Greasy, heavy, fatty foods
- Dairy products
- Highly processed food
- Refined carbohydrates (sugar, white flour)
- Processed grains
- Cold food like ice cream and cold shakes
- Large amounts of raw vegetables
- Tofu, soymilk

Prevention and Treatment for Blood Deficiency

- Eat healthy nourishing foods.
- Eat slowly and with gratitude.
- Try not to eat when you are highly stressed.
- If you are under stress, try meditation, yoga, or another activity that helps you feel more calm.
- Take frequent breaks from your mental and physical work to allow your body and brain to rest. A balance between work and rest is necessary for your body to work properly and optimally and make Qi and blood.
- Have an outlet for strong emotions such as exercise, martial arts, or a hobby.
- Practice open communication with your family, friends, and coworkers.
- See your acupuncturist for herbs, acupuncture, and moxa.

References: