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New mothers turn to an old Chinese diet

Zuo yuezi, or sitting the month, is a 30-day regimen of food and rest to help new mothers recover from the rigors of childbirth. Skeptics say the claims are unsound.

January 13, 2013 | By Cindy Chang, Los Angeles Times

Engaging full-bore in *yuezi* requires a wide-ranging palate. The foods contain ingredients unfamiliar to Westerners yet can taste somewhat bland because there is little added salt or sugar. To follow through on the hygienic imperatives, a tolerance for itchy scalps is a must.

On day 24 of the 30-day regimen, Ginny Hung greeted visitors with her unwashed hair knotted in a braid and covered by a white stocking cap. The greasiness no longer bothered her, she said — it just felt like she was wearing a lot of conditioner.

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Since giving birth to a son, Hung had stepped outside her Hacienda Heights town house only once, to snap photos of her two older children in their Halloween costumes.

By the third week of *yuezi*, her main course had shifted from liver and kidney soups to chicken soup with sesame oil, thought to promote an intense healing that the body can't handle in the initial weeks.

Hung believes the month after giving birth offers a rare chance to tweak the body's inner workings. Her hands and feet no longer get cold after she observed *yuezi* with her first two babies, she said. She hopes the benefits will continue into old age.

yuezi

If nothing else, *yuezi* offers a chance for a little relaxation before the hard work of child rearing begins.

"This is the only moment you feel like a princess," said Lisa Lee, 31, a Diamond Bar mother of two. "Later,

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