

Balance Your Energy & Improve Your Health

with Traditional Chinese Herbal Formulas

Health is found in balance and moderation. You need to exercise, but exercise that is too strenuous for you can lead to injury and severe fatigue. Exercise must be balanced by rest, but if you are too inactive your body becomes weak. You need to eat, but eating too much isn't healthy and leads to diseases associated with obesity. And if you don't eat enough, you will become malnourished, weaken and develop other health problems.

Unfortunately, people in Western society are prone to excess and its corresponding imbalances. Some adopt extreme diets and think that everyone else should as well. Many seem to live by the maxim, "if a little is good, more is better."

This tendency to excess is made worse by Western medicine which often treats various organs or systems as if they were disconnected from the rest of the body and the general idea that the body is just a machine which can be fixed without regard to a person's mental and emotional state. It's hard to find balance and moderation when thinking of the body as separate individual parts, rather than as a whole.

To help understand this, imagine someone under modern medical care, they might be taking a synthetic hormone for low thyroid, a statin for high cholesterol, a beta blocker for high blood pressure and an SSRI for depression. Yet, all of these health problems are interconnected. They all arise from the same genetics, diet, lifestyle, mental attitudes and emotional state, none of which are being addressed.

Holistic healing means looking at all of these factors and recognizing the overall patterns of imbalance and the excesses and deficiencies that give rise to them. Using this information as a whole instead of attempting to categorize symptoms into diseases will result in improving total health and lead to a more balanced way of living.

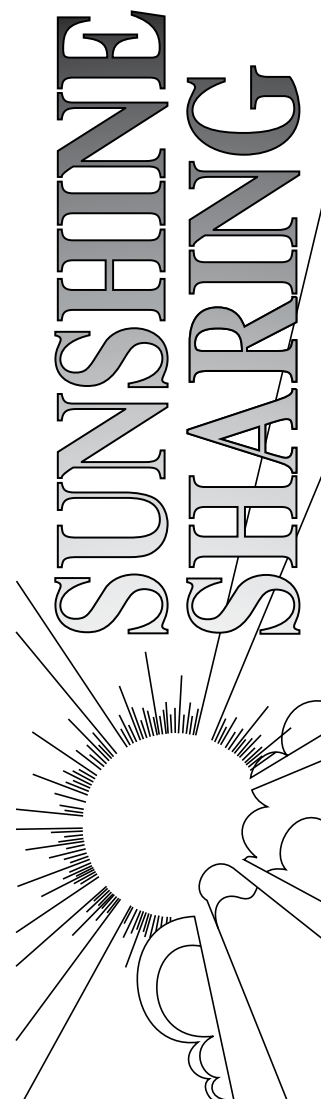
Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional systems of medicine have relied on this holistic approach for thousands of years and have much to teach us about balance. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is one of these systems and is based on over 2000 years of recorded human experience. TCM puts the concept we are trying to understand in this way, "many treatments for one disease, one treatment for many diseases." Wording it a little differently, one treatment can help many diseases, but an individual disease will require a different treatment from person to person.

To explain this, let's use the example of depression. Depression has many causes, so a holistic practitioner would look at all the health problems the person has, as well as what is going on in their life. Using this information he would create a custom treatment designed to bring that person's body back into balance and get rid of all their ailments, not just the depression.

Since the pattern of symptoms, and the underlying imbalances they reveal, will vary with each person suffering from depression, the treatment will be different for different people. Furthermore, in each case, the therapy will be designed to heal all the person's health problems, not just the depression.

In this *Sunshine Sharing* you'll learn about each of the five Chinese elements and the life processes they represent, how to identify ten basic patterns of imbalance, and how you can bring your body back into balance, harmony and health.



Your guide to better health the natural way.

Vol. 30 No. 8

Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

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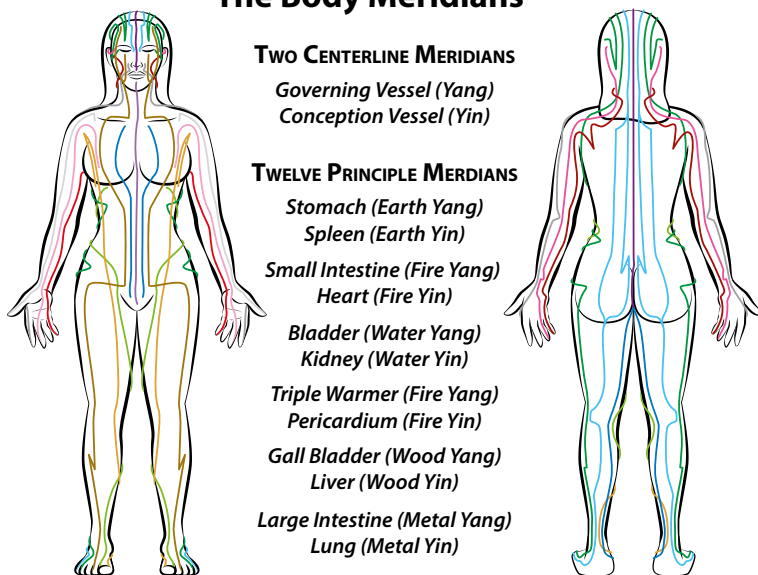
Introducing The Chinese Elements & Meridians

Most people have heard of the Chinese treatment system called acupuncture. Acupuncture is based on the concept that there are meridians or channels through which the energy of life flows. Blockages in these meridians cause certain body processes (and the organs associated with them) to malfunction. Acupuncture is used to rebalance these energies and restore the body to health.

These energies can also be balanced with herbs. According to TCM, herbs enter various meridian channels and help to balance and heal the organs and body processes associated with them.

As shown in the illustration below, there are two centerline meridians and 12 principle meridians. The 12 meridians are named for major organs that are affected by the flow of energy through them. These organs also govern and regulate the energy flow. Each of these 12 meridians is associated with one of the TCM elements, which are wood, fire, earth, metal and water.

The Body Meridians



TWO CENTERLINE MERIDIANS

Governing Vessel (Yang)
Conception Vessel (Yin)

TWELVE PRINCIPLE MERIDIANS

Stomach (Earth Yang)
Spleen (Earth Yin)
Small Intestine (Fire Yang)
Heart (Fire Yin)
Bladder (Water Yang)
Kidney (Water Yin)
Triple Warmer (Fire Yang)
Pericardium (Fire Yin)
Gall Bladder (Wood Yang)
Liver (Wood Yin)
Large Intestine (Metal Yang)
Lung (Metal Yin)

It's important to understand that these elements aren't literal but represent the energetic processes that maintain life. For example, earth is associated with the process of nourishment or assimilation, while metal is associated with self-defense or immunity.

Each of these energies has an ascending (or increasing) aspect and a descending (or decreasing) aspect. The ascending energy is yang and the descending energy is yin. Yang meridians are associated with excess energy and acute illness, while yin meridians are associated with deficient energy and chronic illness.



The Wood Element

The wood element in TCM represents the energy of life—the will to live and the desire to grow and achieve. It is the harmonizing element, orchestrating all the other processes of life to work in a balanced and unified way. When wood energy is balanced, life and health flow smoothly. If you're able to easily navigate problems in your life, achieve what you want and work well with others you have a strong, balanced wood energy.

When wood energy is out of balance, life doesn't move as smoothly. Physically, you don't feel good, but can't seem to figure out why. You may even feel like you're a hypochondriac because you feel sick, but don't have anything specifically wrong with you. Emotionally, blockage or obstruction in the wood energy will leave you feeling trapped, stuck or thwarted in life.

The ruling yang organ of the earth element is the gall bladder. Excess wood is characterized by aggressiveness, anger and irritability. If you have excess wood energy, you might say that you feel "galled" or "bitter." You will be easily irritated and often lose your temper.

Physically, you may suffer from headaches, especially migraines. You may find it difficult to relax and go to sleep at night and you don't wake up feeling refreshed in the morning. Instead, you will feel groggy and hung over. You may also have irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), acid reflux and a stuffy feeling under the right rib cage.

When these indications are present, a **TCM Wood Reducing Formula** may be helpful. Key herbs in this formula would be bupleurum, peony, cassia cinnamon twig and dong quai. This formula will help to clear the congestion in the liver, calm feelings of irritability, improve digestion and aid a general feeling of wellbeing.

The liver meridian is the yin aspect of the wood energy. In TCM the liver builds and stores the blood and supports the tendons and joints of the body. This allows for free flowing movement.

If your wood energy is deficient, you will have difficulty setting and achieving goals. Because you don't get what you want in life you may experience frustration, disappointment and even depression. You may feel tired, weak and struggle to stand up for yourself.

Physically, you may experience dry skin or skin eruptive diseases (like acne and eczema). You may be pale, feel cold and suffer from joint problems and brittle nails. Eye problems are also an indication of liver energy weakness in TCM.

When indications like these are present, a **TCM Wood Increasing Formula** may be helpful. Key herbs in this formula would be peony root without bark, dong quai, ganoderma, bupleurum, and turmeric. This formula will help the liver build up healthier blood, providing better energy and vitality for the whole body.

You can create greater balance in your liver energy by having clear goals in life and working towards them. You also need to develop relationships based on seeking harmony and showing mutual respect. Eating dark green leafy vegetables and berries also helps to tone and balance the wood element.

The Fire Element

The fire element represents the processes that warm and energize the body, providing energy and motivation. Fire is associated with passion, as in being "all fired up." It is also shown in sexual drive when feeling "hot" for someone. When your fire element is balanced, you will feel energized, happy and positive, as well as feeling emotionally warm, friendly and sexually passionate.



The fire element is unique because it has four meridians. The yang meridians are the small intestine and pericardium meridians. These meridians will be affected by an excess of fire energy, which manifests in an overly excited, manic nature. If you have fire-excess you will talk loudly and rapidly. You will have trouble sitting still

and experience restlessness, anxiety, insomnia, rapid mood swings, impatience and excessive sexual desire.

If you have these indications, a **TCM Fire Reducing Formula** containing key herbs like oyster shell, haliotis shell, silk tree bark and hoelen may help. This blend will calm down the excessive mania and nervous excitement, helping you to have greater self-control and be more calm and focused.

In contrast, the yin energy of the fire element is expressed in the heart and triple warmer meridians, which are affected by deficient fire. The easiest way to understand this state is to think of the Western idea of burn out. This is where a person feels exhausted, often from a long period of physical or emotional stress.

Fire deficiency manifests as fatigue coupled with anxiety that makes relaxing difficult. Even when you are tired, you don't sleep well. You may experience bad dreams, toss and turn in your sleep, wake up frequently needing to urinate, or simply wake up after a few hours and lie awake thinking about your problems.

In this exhausted state you may feel overwhelmed, emotionally sensitive and lose interest in sex. You may also experience muddled thinking, a loss of short-term memory and mental confusion. You may even experience sensations of pressure and pain in your chest and think that something is physically wrong with your heart, when it's just anxiety and stress.

If you feel like this, you could benefit from a **TCM Fire Increasing Formula** to rekindle your energy and vitality. Key herbs in this formula would be schisandra fruit, Oriental arborvitae seed, broomrape and dodder. This formula will aid sleep and restore energy, helping to rekindle the spark of life that brings you happiness and joy.

You can help to balance your fire energy by learning to be orderly and organized. Practice self-control with your appetites and emotions. Bitter foods, including unsweetened coffee and dark chocolate, stimulate and increase the fire element.



The Earth Element

The earth element represents the energy of being nourished and nurtured, as in mother earth. A person with a balanced earth energy will be able to balance their needs with the needs of others. They will also be able to appropriately nourish their body and digest their food without problems.

The yang organ of the earth element is the stomach, which sits near the center of the body and receives the food you eat. If you have an excess of earth energy you will be pensive, overly focused on what you are doing and overly concerned for yourself, ignoring those around you.

Physically, you may be prone to have a sour stomach, often because you eat on the run and don't take time to relax when eating. You may experience bloating, belching, gas, acid indigestion, acid reflux and poor appetite. You will probably crave sweets or junk food.

An excess of earth energy calls for a **TCM Earth Reducing Formula** with the key ingredients Chinese giant hyssop, hawthorn, hoelen, and magnolia bark. This can settle the stomach, ease bloating, reduce sugar cravings and help food digest more efficiently.

The yin energy for the earth element is found in the spleen meridian. A person with deficient earth energy is too absorbed with

the problems of others. If you have a deficient earth energy, you can't remain centered and get overly caught up in worrying about the people around you and neglect your own needs. Sweet and starchy foods increase the earth element and should be avoided with excess earth.

Earth deficiency causes people to become excessively skinny. If you are an elderly person who is thin and weak or if you have lost weight from a prolonged illness or by following an extreme diet, you are deficient in earth energy. You may also suffer from a loss of tissue integrity, such as organ prolapsus, varicose veins or easy bruising.

If this describes you, you may benefit from a **TCM Earth Increasing Formula** with the key herbs Asian ginseng, astragalus root, atractylodes and Chinese yam. Taking this can improve appetite, help develop better muscle mass and strengthen your body.

You can balance your earth energy generally by learning to be honest with yourself about your own needs. Eat in a relaxed and friendly environment. It also helps to be trustworthy in your relationships with others so that people know they can depend on you to be honest.



The Metal Element

The metal element represents the defensive energy of the body. These immune system processes form the "swords and shields" of the body.

A person with a healthy metal energy can stand up for themselves emotionally and physically. They are able to resist infection and other harmful environmental influences. They have a sense of dignity and self-worth. In contrast, imbalances in the metal element can reflect poor self-esteem and a lack of healthy emotional boundaries.

The metal element is associated with the colon meridian (yang) and the lung meridian (yin). Both the colon and the lung are lined with mucus membranes which, along with the skin, form the protective surfaces of the body.

Excess metal energy is associated with heavy mucus production, sinus drainage, sneezing and coughing. Acute asthma attacks, bronchitis and other problems that temporarily obstruct air passages are reflections of an excess of metal energy. These problems are often accompanied by constipation and sluggish bowel elimination, and/or dysbiosis, the disruption of the friendly flora in the digestive tract. Acute grieving, sadness and emotional pain can also be part of metal excess.

If you have indications like this, a **TCM Metal Reducing Formula**, containing the key herbs typhonium, bamboo sap, bupleurum, and fritillary bulb, may be helpful. It will help open your lungs so you can breathe freely again.

Weakened metal energy adversely affects lung function causing more deep-seated respiratory problems like asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorders (COPD). Weak metal energy often involves chronic grief and sadness, which has been buried or stifled. This can cause you to be overly guarded emotionally, making you appear aloof and dogmatic.

If you have indications like these, a **TCM Metal Increasing Formula** can help strengthen your lungs and normalize your breathing. Key herbs in this formula would include astragalus, Tartarian aster root, large-leaf gentian root, platycodon and anemarrhena.

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This issue of *Sunshine Sharing* is provided by:

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Pungent or spicy herbs like ginger and capsicum increase the metal element.

The lungs sit on top of the other major organs, the heart, kidneys, liver, stomach and colon. According to TCM, the rhythmical process of breathing helps distribute energy to these organs. However, when feeling emotionally disturbed breathing is disrupted, affecting the entire body. To keep your metal element balanced, practice slow, deep breathing to help you stay calm and emotionally centered.



The Water Element

Water represents fluidity, the ability to “go with the flow.” Water is also the foundation of life (as we are mostly water). The water element allows us to handle stress and difficulty with ease.

A person with a balanced water element understands themselves and has the wisdom to know when to take a stand and when to gracefully retreat as the moisture (flexibility) in their body is balanced with strength (solidity).

The bladder meridian is the yang side of the water system and is affected by an excess of the water energy. If you have too much water energy you suffer from excessive fear. You lack backbone and are too wishy-washy” in life, compromising too much and acting as an overly accommodating people pleaser.

Physically, an excess of water energy is characterized by fluid retention or edema. It may also involve scant or clear urine, bladder infections, burning urination and heavy, sluggish feelings.

When these factors are present, a **TCM Water Decreasing Formula** is indicated. This formula will promote lymphatic flow and kidney drainage, flushing excess fluid and toxins from the system. Key herbs in such a formula would be hoelen, siler root, quince, white mulberry root bark and Asian plantain seed.

The kidney meridian is the yin energy of the water element. A deficiency of water energy creates inflexibility and brittleness. Rigidity, whether physical or emotional, is a sign of low water energy. If you are deficient in water energy you become hardened, inflexible and rigid in your thought processes. You can no longer smoothly adapt to changing circumstances.

Physically, water deficiency will result in spinal misalignment, chronic backache (especially in the low back), weak knees and ankles, arthritis and osteoporosis. You may also struggle to hold onto water and experience afternoon or night sweats. Premature aging, including the graying of the hair is associated with a weakness in the water element as are reproductive problems, including erectile dysfunction, lack of sexual desire and infertility.

These indications call for a **TCM Water Increasing Formula**, which will strengthen both the kidneys and the bones. Containing herbs like eucommia, broomrape, achyranthes, Sichuan teasel root, and morinda root, it will be helpful for chronic urinary problems, reproductive weakness, premature aging and structural stiffness, aches and pains. It can also help to build stronger bones and more flexible joints.

Developing wisdom in life will help to balance your water energy. If you burn the candle at both ends you’ll deplete your water energy. Learning to navigate life’s stressful situations in a graceful way, without overly compromising yourself, will help keep your water element in balance. Salty foods, such as soy sauce, miso and seaweeds tone the water element.

Most people can see themselves in at least one of the patterns we’ve explained. Once you’ve identified an imbalance, try the recommended formula. You may be out of balance in more than one area. If so, pick the one imbalance that matches where you are now and work on it, then move to the others. Bringing the elements that are out of balance will help bring the whole body back into balance, harmony and health.

Additional Help and Information

For more information about traditional Chinese medicine contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

Chinese Traditional Herbal Medicine by Dr. Michael Tierra and Lesley Tierra

Healing with Chinese Herbs by Steven Horne

What is Your Chinese Constitutional Type Quiz treelite.com/quizzes/chinese-constitutional-quiz