

# Traditional Chinese Medicine Diagnosis

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There are three main theories of diagnosis in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). An acupuncturist uses each of them at different times either singularly or in combination. These theories have been developed through observation of the natural order of the universe. There is much that we can discover about ourselves in our process of healing through learning about the laws of nature. The information derived from these theories makes common sense and can be applied to everyday life in a practical way.

The first diagnostic technique is based on the Theory of Yin and Yang which make up the essential opposites of the universe. Yin is attributed to female energy, gentleness, intuitiveness, inwardness, nighttime, darkness, contraction, water, coldness, heaviness. Yang refers to male energy, activity, aggressiveness, outwardness, daytime, light, expansion, fire.



An acupuncturist uses this information to determine whether a patient is either more yin or yang. It is rare for a person to be purely a yin or yang constitution, but usually combination of both. A yin predominance is signified by a cold, chronic, wet, and weak condition. Whereas, a yang predominance is signified by a hot, acute, dry, and excessive condition.

Once the determination is made, the acupuncturist uses the information to select the appropriate acupuncture points, herbal formulations, diet, lifestyle, and exercise protocols. Basically, if a person is too yin we suggest things that will make them more yang. Conversely, if they are too yang we balance them out by making them more yin.

For example if a person is cold all the time, suffers from chronic fatigue, and is thin it would be helpful if they eat mostly cooked foods to warm their body and receive acupuncture to build their energy. The objective is to always be moving toward the center of the yin/yang continuum which will create more balance in the patient's life.

The second diagnostic technique employed in Traditional Chinese Medicine is the Law of the Five Elements. The Five Elements are fire, earth, metal, water, and wood. The Fire Element is represented by the heart, small intestine, triple warmer, and pericardium; Earth Element by the spleen and stomach; Metal Element by the lung and large intestine; Water Element by the kidney and bladder; and Wood Element by the liver and gall bladder.

Each element nourishes specific areas of the body and is associated with a particular color, taste, food, season, direction, and smell. For example, the Water Element which is represented by the kidneys and bladder is associated with the bones, hair on the head, lower back, winter, salty taste, and fear. Therefore if a person complains of being afraid of water and is suffering from lower back pain, the acupuncturist would consider the kidney energy as a potential area to be balanced.



There are two main cycles involved in the Five Elements. The first is the creative cycle which is called the Shen cycle. The Shen cycle represents a casual relationship between the Five Elements whereby one element creates or nourishes the next element in line. The Shen cycle is likened to the relationship between a mother and child symbolized by nurturance. So in the Five Elements - fire nourishes earth, earth nourishes metal, metal nourishes wood, and wood nourishes fire.

An example of a clinical application of the Shen cycle would be in a situation where a patient's liver energy is excessive and the kidney energy is deficient. In this case the liver excess is most likely being caused because the mother (kidney energy) is deficient and not able to sufficiently nourish its child (liver energy.) Just like when a mother does not nurture her child, the child acts out.



The second cycle of the Five Elements is the controlling or Ko cycle. In the Ko cycle one element controls or disciplines the next element. This means fire controls metal, metal controls wood, wood controls earth, earth controls water, and water controls fire.

The Ko cycle is similar to the relationship between father and child symbolized by discipline and control.

The clinical application of the Ko cycle would be if a patient had liver energy excess and spleen energy deficiency. It could be surmised in this case the spleen energy deficiency is caused by the liver energy excess (wood) overcontrolling the spleen element (earth), leaving it helpless. Just like when a child is devastated by an overbearing and overcontrolling father. An acupuncturist can use the Law of the Five Elements to balance and readjust the energetic flow from one element, thus from one organ system to the next. This is done through choosing certain points which move energy from one organ to another through either tonification or sedation.

The Five Elements is also used to understand many of the psychological aspects of a person and how they interact in the world. It is concerned with the psycho-spiritual basis of illness and views physical symptoms and signs as superficial manifestations of underlying constitutional imbalances. A Five Element treatment is often designed to return a person back to their original nature.

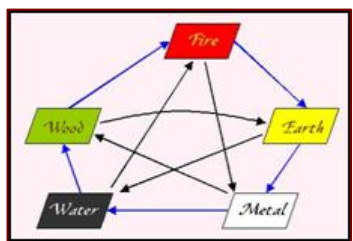


Eight Principles is the third method for Traditional Chinese Medicine determination of energetic imbalance. This is based on whether a patient's symptoms are either internal or external / cold or hot / yin or yang / and deficient or excess. The information gathered from this assessment is then plugged into a particular symptom/sign complex and subsequently used to determine the method of treatment.



For example, the most common symptom sign complexes of the liver meridian are - Liver Fire Rising, Constrained Liver Qi, and Deficient Liver Blood. Liver fire rising is exemplified by a patient that is extremely ill tempered and restless, with a red face and eyes, parched mouth, headaches, and vertigo. Constrained Liver Qi would be evident with a person that is depressed, frustrated, inappropriately angry, and has lumps in their throat and neck. If it were a woman, they may complain of menstrual pain, irregular menses, and lumps or distention in the groin, breast or flank. Deficient Liver Yin would be shown in a person that has

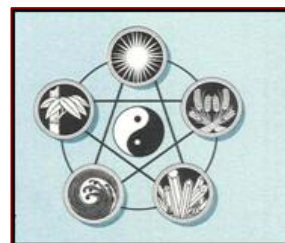
red cheeks, afternoon fever, hot palms and soles, nervousness, dry eyes or other eye problems, and depression. An acupuncturist would determine which one of these symptom/sign complexes best fits their patient and then use it to determine the appropriate treatment protocol.



After using the Theory of Yin and Yang, Five Elements, and Eight Principles, the acupuncturist confirms their Chinese diagnosis through tongue, pulse, and abdominal diagnosis, which is yet another detailed construct of its own. Acupuncture, herbs, massage, and exercise would then be used either separately or in combination to guide the patient toward the creation of balance and ultimately, better

health in their life.

In summary this is an example of a patient who is withdrawn, weak, angry, depressed, and nervous with red cheeks and dry eyes. Using the theories we have discussed so far, it could be determined that this patient has a yin constitution, involving the wood element, and a Deficient Liver Yin energetic diagnosis. An acupuncturist would feel the patient's pulse, look at the tongue, and palpate the abdomen as well as selected acupuncture points to confirm this energetic imbalance. A treatment principle would then be selected which would include acupuncture points and / or herbs to nourish the liver yin.



As you have learned from the information presented, the acupuncturist has quite a job ahead of them in determining the appropriate Traditional Chinese Medicine diagnosis. The main objective is to conduct a thorough evaluation, gather enough information, decide on a treatment principle, and then create a treatment plan. Traditional Chinese Diagnosis is quite complicated yet based on the simple laws of nature. There is much we can gain from this ancient form of natural healing to bring our bodies into energetic harmony.

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