



THE MANY FACES OF QI

by Shoshanna Katzman

The Chinese Medicine Body Clock illustrates the fixed and continuous flow of energy which occurs in two-hour cycles within a 24 hour period as it transitions from one meridian (energy pathway) to the next. During each two hour period, the energy of the related vital organ is at its peak. These vital organ/time designations provide practical guidance in terms of diagnosis, determination of optimal time to balance energy flow, as well as decisions about when to do a particular activity - such as best time for eating, exercising or sleeping.

According to Chinese medicine theory the energy flow moving through these cycles is known as Qi. It is the life force that moves throughout the body via a complex meridian system of pathways also known as channels and collaterals. Twelve main meridians and eight extraordinary vessels work together to move Qi throughout the body. The main meridians are named according to their associated internal organ, categorized as either Yin or Yang, and paired with their opposite. For example,

the lung meridian is categorized as Yin which governs the function of the body and coupled with the large intestine meridian which is Yang which governs the structures of the body. When their energetic flow is viewed according to the Chinese Body Clock the time of the lung meridian is from 3 to 5am and the large intestine from 5 to 7am.

This can be better understood through the way the body functions in both healthy and unhealthy ways during these two hour periods. For example, it is quite typical for an individual with asthma to experience their greatest difficulty breathing between 3 and 5am. Also gall bladder time is from 11pm to 1am and liver time from 1 to 3am – special times when these organs need rest, versus the common practice of staying up with late night endeavors. These organs, especially the liver, are related to creativity so getting to sleep by 11pm will strengthen these organs and lead to greater creative productivity in the morning.

Furthermore, it's normal and recommended for bowel elimination

to take place between 5 and 7am as regularity in lifestyle habits is a basic key for optimal health according to Chinese medicine. Accordingly, once the body has eliminated, it is now time to introduce warm and nourishing food into the body and then give adequate time for digestion before eating again. This is recommended during the body clock time for the vital organs related to transformation and transportation of food which are the stomach and spleen meridians - with their two-hour energy boost times of 7-9am and 9-11am respectively. Between 3-5pm it is advisable to have a cup of tea to support the health of the urinary bladder which is at its peak during this two hour period.

A Chinese medicine practitioner also uses the body clock in combination with presenting symptoms and signs to decide upon a fitting diagnosis. For example, if an individual has symptoms such as extreme fatigue and low back pain especially in the very late afternoon an appropriate energetic diagnosis would be “deficient kidney Yang”. Application of acupuncture treatment would be most effective from 5 to 7pm which is kidney time. It would also be an added benefit to practice Tai Chi or Qigong during this time period followed by a balanced and warming nutritional meal.

Chinese medicine contains a vast amount of information about the way Qi flows through the body and how disruptions in this flow leads to illness and disease. It furthermore provides ways to restore Qi flow to help an individual become balanced and healthy – whether it be acupuncture received from a practitioner or Tai Chi and Qigong exercise that you practice daily. Knowledge about the energetic circulatory system provides an individual with greater understanding of the inner-workings of their body as well as impetus to live life in a way that nourishes their Qi.

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