



The Power of Wei Qi

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S.

The ancient Chinese medical approach to health and healing is based on the belief that qi is the vital substance that constitutes the human body and maintains its basic functions. Healthy qi serves to maintain normal bodily functions and pathogenic qi refers to substances that invade and wreak havoc within the body such as viruses and bacteria. This approach is based on a medical text known as the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine (Huang Di Nei Jing) written in approximately 99 B.C.E.-26 B.C.E. that lists 83 different types of qi.

Maintaining proper qi flow requires opening and releasing its flow when blocked or stuck, strengthening flow when deficient, reversing flow when moving in the wrong direction and lifting qi flow when it is dropped. The Chinese medicine modalities of acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, tuina massage and the exercises of tai chi and qigong are traditionally employed to strengthen the vital energy of qi. This also includes making dietary and other lifestyle choices that strengthen and preserve, rather than deplete qi reserves. These ancient methods serve to rectify

energetic imbalance and prevent it from re-occurring. And they work toward keeping one's emotional state in a perpetual state of balance by replenishing the body, mind and spirit with ample amounts of qi and blood.

Maintaining emotional balance is essential because emotions have a direct impact on how qi flows within the body. In fact, Chinese medicine theory teaches us that imbalanced emotions have the potential to become an endogenous or internal cause of dysfunction and disease. For example, excessive pent-up anger decreases flow and results in stagnation of qi within the liver meridian. In turn, this leads to symptoms such as breathing difficulty, distending chest pain, anxiety and depression. The following passage from the Su Wen which is also known as "The Book of Plain Questions" sheds additional light on this subject:

"I know that the hundred diseases are generated by the qi. When one is angry, then the qi rises. When one is joyous, then the qi relaxes. When one is sad, then the qi dissipates. When one is in fear, then the qi moves down. In the case of cold the qi collects; in case of heat, the qi flows out.

When one is frightened, then the qi is in disorder. When one is exhausted, then the qi is wasted. When one is pensive, then the qi lumps together."

"Wei qi" is a healthy form of qi commonly known as "defensive qi" -- one that builds and maintains strong immune function. It exists outside of the blood vessels and flows everywhere in the body. Wei qi is controlled by the lung energy system which spreads it outward and regulates its circulation to the skin. This form of qi flows primarily on the superficial layers of the body - includ-

ing the skin surface and between the soft tissues of skin and muscle.

This special form of qi provides immune protection through regulating body temperature by adjusting and alternating the closing and opening of skin pores. It keeps the pores of the skin closed to stop pathogens from entering the body, thereby protecting it as a whole from being invaded by harmful factors, which would otherwise lead to illness. Chinese medicine describes these factors as exogenous or external pathogens, including aspects such as harsh weather, microorganisms, harmful emotions and evil spiritual forces. If exogenous factors enter the body, defensive qi reacts by opening the pores to induce sweating with the purpose of releasing pathogens and toxins from the body.



Defensive qi performs its protective function through formation of a wei qi field. Chinese medicine primarily limits location of this wei qi field to the surface of the body. However, medical qigong teaches that it includes three fields, stemming from internal organ energy that radiates outward through the body's external tissues and into the subtle energy field. These fields are said to extend outward several feet from



the surface of the physical body. They are used for treatment, where the field closest to the boundary of the skin is treated to impact the physical body, the one farthest away to work on spiritual aspects and the field in between to impact emotional and mental components.

During this COVID-19 pandemic times it is more important than ever to keep wei qi strong. There are so many ways that Chinese medicine has to offer to manifest this goal. Maintaining physical, emotional, spiritual and energetic balance is an important step to keeping yourself calm, strong and centered while weathering this COVID storm. And be sure to take plenty of rhythmic deep breaths to keep lung qi strong!

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