

What is Qi?

A fundamental concept of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) dating back over 3,000 years, qi (pronounced "chee") is the Chinese word for energy, which also carries with it connotations of "air," "breath," and "life force."

In TCM, it is understood that everything from humans and animals to rocks and trees is filled with qi. This energy facilitates function, communication, and connection and is the uniting force of the universe, as well as the animating life force in all objects.

Qi in the Body

Qi flows through the body via the 14 meridian channels, which run either up

the flow of qi and resulting in energy congestion. Several TCM techniques are designed to clear these blockages and restore balance and flow to the body's energy.

Working with Qi

Along each meridian are points, known as acupoints or pressure points, where these energy blockages are likely to occur. Significant acupoints are also known as trigger points, and these are often starting points for therapists working to clear congested qi.

An important principle of qi is that clearing blockages at certain trigger points will help restore flow and thus



Qi is a fundamental concept of traditional Chinese medicine.

or down throughout the body along specific pathways. These pathways deliver energy to organs, structures, and systems in a constant pattern, and when qi is flowing along these meridians a person is said to be in balance.

Illness, injury, stress, and other trauma can cause blockages along these meridians, thus impairing or stopping

impact parts of the body that are connected along the various meridians. For example, this could mean that working on someone's foot might benefit an internal organ like the liver. This concept further illustrates that qi in the body is one balanced system in which one imbalance can affect several

Continued on page 2

*A smile is a
curve that sets
everything
straight*

Office Hours and Contact

Reflexology by Katie
reflexologybykatie.com
 860-234-0626
reflexologybykatie@gmail.com

In this Issue

What is Qi?
Is the Season Getting You Down?
Long Live Cells with Vitamin E

Continued from page 1

body parts and even alter emotional states.

Cultivating Qi

Every person is born with a certain amount of qi, and through our lives we increase it and refill it through breathing, eating, and moving. One specific practice of movement to increase and balance qi is known as qigong, a system of hands-on and hands-off techniques that incorporate timed breathing, gentle movement, meditation, visualization, and more to build and balance qi. This practice can be undertaken with a qigong practitioner or on one's own once schooled in the movements and techniques.

Another movement practice intended to increase and balance the body's energy is t'ai chi, which uses relaxed breathing and rhythmic movements to relax the body and refresh the mind. T'ai chi is not strenuous and can be practiced by people of any age.

The Cycle of Qi

A TCM practitioner focusing on qi often asks more questions of a client during the intake process than a Western-styled massage therapist. One reason for this is that balancing qi is more than just correcting physical blockages; it is about understanding what may have caused those blockages in the first place and correcting that root cause.

Qi is also linked to elements and seasons in a cyclical way that can become disrupted.

Specific disharmonies or blockages can relate to specific phases, and knowing more about you can allow the practitioner to better assess and understand how best to help rebalance your qi.

Understanding Qi

For many people familiar with the Western medical tradition, qi is a difficult concept to grasp. Talking with a qigong practitioner or participating in a t'ai chi session are a few ways to gain exposure to the movements and the attitudes surrounding qi, but for some it may take experiencing energy work to

actually come to a better understanding. If nothing else, sitting quietly and focusing on your body can help you appreciate the ancient idea that we are filled with qi running throughout our bodies.

Randy Burgess, a practitioner trained in acupuncture and tui na, uses the following analogy of a boat in the water: "The wind reaches the sail, the sail expands and applies pressure to the mast, and the pressure to the mast moves the boat through the water. The wind isn't qi, the sail isn't qi, the mast isn't, the boat isn't, the water isn't. The qi is where the wind meets the sail, where the sail applies pressure to the mast, where the mast applies pressure to the boat, where the boat slips through the water. If there are holes in the sail, you're going to have qi deficiency; if the mast is weak and moves, it will move the boat forward, but there is deficiency; if there

are barnacles on the hull of the boat, it's not going to slip through the water efficiently, and there is deficiency."



Some ingredients used in traditional Chinese medicine.

Is the Season Getting You Down?

Shine the Light on Winter Blues

In northern climates when the heavy snows fall and the sun moves south, many people find their moods shift from upbeat to downright depressed. The severe form of winter depression--called seasonal affective disorder, or SAD--affects at least two million North Americans. Another thirty-nine million experience milder symptoms of moodiness and extended sleep patterns that somewhat resemble hibernation.

Overeating, sleeping for prolonged periods, mood swings, carbohydrate cravings, and weight gain during winter months may be more than just symptoms of cabin fever. They can suggest a biochemical reaction caused by a lack of exposure to sunlight.

Like all living things, we humans are sensitive to the seasons and sunlight. We secrete a hormone called melatonin, which helps us sleep at night and stay awake during the day. Melatonin production is directly linked to sun

exposure. So, as the days get shorter during the winter, our bodies produce more and more melatonin and we can literally feel like going into a cave and hibernating.

Many SAD sufferers manage their seasonal depression with daily exposure to full-spectrum lamps or light boxes. By getting daily doses of natural light, they can fool their brains into thinking it's summertime, and their need to sleep decreases.

Recent research shows that timing these light therapy sessions to our natural biological clocks is even more beneficial than usage during the day. Exposure to natural spectrum bright light for thirty minutes on awakening is twice as effective as evening sessions, and one study found this practice actually had an 80 percent chance of sending SAD into remission.

If winter blues are getting to you, consider investing in a full spectrum

lamp and use it first thing in the morning--because SAD is for the bears.



Loosen the grip of seasonal affective disorder.

Long Live Cells with Vitamin E

Antiaging Inside and Out

A good skin care regimen is comprised of an antioxidant-rich diet and vitamin/mineral supplementation that includes vitamin E -- an essential key to a healthy complexion. Vitamin E is unique in that it's not one vitamin, but a family of eight fat-soluble antioxidants, including four types of tocopherols and four types of tocotrienols -- alpha, beta, gamma, and delta. Alpha-tocopherol is the most common and most potent form of vitamin E.

This important nutrient works to prevent aging by prolonging the useful life of cells in the body. By protecting and strengthening the cell membrane, vitamin E wards off free radical attacks caused by sun exposure and also helps combat disease. This protection is further intensified when combined with vitamin C. Vitamin E also helps in the

formation of red blood cells, protecting them from destructive toxins and cell damage, which also helps prevent skin cancer.

Vitamin E-rich foods include wheat germ; almonds, peanuts, and walnuts; safflower, corn, and soybean oils; and green leafy vegetables. For supplementation, the recommended daily intake of vitamin E is 400 IU. Be aware that high doses of vitamin E (1,200 IU daily or more) can be toxic and cause oxidative damage.

It is imperative that when taking the supplement orally, it is in the natural form, designated with a "d," and not synthetic, designated as "dl." Mixed tocopherols--meaning a combination of alpha, beta, gamma, and delta--are easily absorbed and a good choice,

especially in skin care products.

Topical creams and oils containing vitamin E promote healing, protect cells from free-radical damage, and reduce itchiness--very helpful in treating conditions such as sunburn and eczema.

In addition to contributing to healthy skin, vitamin E has many other beneficial properties, including slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease, decreasing oxidative stress associated with asthma, alleviating arthritic conditions, decreasing PMS symptoms, and reducing the risk of heart disease.

*A good laugh
recharges your
battery*

REFLEXOLOGY BY KATIE

Visit reflexologybykatie.com
and like Reflexology by Katie on Facebook!

107 Wilcox Road Suite 107C
Stonington CT 06378

860-234-0626

Reflexology by Katie

107 Wilcox Road Suite 107C
Stonington, CT 06378



Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals