

Cultivation of the Qi of Five Organs, Part I

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Qi (Chi) is also called vital energy or life force. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Qi refers to the vital substances contained in the human body that maintain life activities. Qi also refers to the physiological functions of the organs such as the heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys. Please note that although the names of these five organs are the same as modern anatomical terms, the concepts are not the same from the point of view of TCM.

Qi of the Heart

Qi of the heart is the driving force of heart beats and blood circulation. Only when the heart qi is sufficient can the heart keep normal strength, rate, and rhythm. Any kind of mental activities, such as spirit, consciousness, and thinking, are made possible by qi of the heart. TCM believes that the heart is the house of the spirit and the master of the five organs. To nourish the heart, one should stay calm, eliminate mental stress and anxiety, and maintain ease of mind. It is especially beneficial to meditate daily and to avoid extreme excitement.

Qi of the Liver

Proper liver functions promote moral and mental activities, as indicated by happiness, sensitivity, being at ease, and being able to reason. Qi of the liver helps the spleen distribute nutrients to body systems, and helps the stomach digest food and helps the gall bladder increase bile secretion to keep the functions of digestion and absorption balanced. While resting, the body needs less blood. The liver is able to store up to 55% of the blood during rest. The blood is then released for physical activity as needed. To cultivate liver qi, try to maintain a gentle and pleasant temperament, adapt to different environments, set realistic goals, and be thankful and respectful for everything the universe has provided. Naturally vent your anger, joy, and grief. Never suppress them. Restrict intake of harmful substances such as alcohol.

Qi of the Spleen

TCM teaches that food is digested by the stomach and that food essence is absorbed by the spleen and transported to all parts of the body. The spleen is in charge of water absorption and transportation. It also has the function of controlling all the blood of the body and keeping it circulating normally. Deficient spleen qi may cause hemorrhaging or bleeding. TCM teaches that excessive sitting and over-thinking impairs the spleen. Irregular eating also damages the spleen. To cultivate spleen qi, one is to worry less, get more exercise, and establish good, regular eating habits. There is a saying in China "a decent meal for breakfast, a generous portion for lunch, and a light meal for dinner." In recent years, it has been advocated that one's daily caloric intake should be broken into 30-35% for breakfast, 40% for lunch, and 25-30% for dinner.

Qi of the Lungs

The human body takes in fresh air (oxygen) and expels wast gas (carbon dioxide) through the respiratory functions of the lungs, and in doing so, they keep the metabolism of the human body working smoothly. The lungs also conduct the qi of the whole body to ascend or descend, to enter or exit. If this function of the lungs is abnormal, shortness of breath, low voice, fatigue, or lassitude will result. The lungs promote dissemination of body fluids, activation of energy for defense to the surface of the body, and the ability to fight against external pathogens. Deficient

lung qi brings spontaneous sweating and susceptibility to the common cold due to weak defending energy and an inability to fight off external pathogens. Qi of the lungs can be strengthened by exercises to increase vital capacity: pay attention to breathing; visualize air moving to and from the lower abdomen. Do this abdominal breathing a couple of times a day for 10-15 minutes. There is another Chinese saying: "Stay warm in the spring and cool in the autumn" to help the body make a smooth transition between seasons, which helps to protect the body's defenses.

Qi of the Kidneys

The congenital essence of life, inherited from parents, is enriched and strengthened by food essences. The congenital essence can be transformed into the qi of the kidneys, which is the material basis on which the human body grows, develops, and reproduces. When the essences of the five organs of life are sufficient, a portion is provided for the physiological activities of the body, and the rest is stored in the kidneys for future needs. Kidney qi also regulates water circulation and helps maintain fluid balance in the body. Avoiding sexual strain is the best way to preserve the qi of the kidneys. Excessive sexual activity injures the kidneys. Limiting sexual activity to preserve the essence should start from adolescence. Special care must be taken to conserve kidney qi. Here are a few principles:

- * No sexual activity after over-eating or when extremely hungry.
- * No sexual activity when emotions are excessive.
- * No sexual activity when the weather is very hot or very cold.
- * No sexual activity when the body and the mind are exhausted.
- * Those who are frail should limit sexual activity generally.
- * Avoid drinking alcohol to stir up sexual urges.
- * Avoid using drugs to enhance sexual urges.

Conclusion

A simple way to cultivate the qi of the five organs is to calm the mind, avoid excessive anger, have a healthy diet, do abdominal breathing exercises, and restrict sexual activities.