

# *The Five Elements* The Five Elements, or Five Phases, are

aspects of Qi. These are Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water. In the poetic language of the Five Elements, health is a harmonious balance of all the elements. The Qi of the elements waxes and wanes in daily and seasonal cycles. Each one of us is a unique and characteristic blend of the influences of all the elements.

## *Wood*

*Meridians:* Liver/Gallbladder



People who have strong energy of the Wood element have a clear vision and goals, and know how to bring them into being. They excel at planning and decision making. They can be forceful in disagreements and can strongly argue their opinions. Their piercing, penetrating eyes may attract you, but avoid their wrath.

## *Wood Imbalance*

When the wood Qi is weak, people can be indecisive, without strong direction in life, and stuck. They may be constrained emotionally, unable to express anger. When the Liver Qi is congested or stagnant, people can be arrogant, over controlling, and have angry dispositions. They may have a tendency to be workaholics or have addictive personalities, including the possibility of abusing drugs and alcohol. They may have digestive problems like bloating, gas, alternating constipation and diarrhea.

When Liver Qi is imbalanced, hot and spicy foods may cause too much heat. Sour and bitter flavors are said to benefit the Liver meridian. Excessive frustration and irritation can be especially difficult when the Liver meridian is out of balance. Physical exercise and reading can help restore balance. The fall is a vulnerable time, as well as the winds of March, and extremely hot weather.

Common signs of Liver meridian stress include dry, brittle, thickened nails and pain just below the ribs. Common illnesses include migraines, eye problems, and sinus problems. The Liver meridian circles the genitals, and rashes and discharges are associated with its imbalance, as well as hernias. For women, menstrual problems are common including PMS, painful periods, and heavy bleeding. Uterine fibroids may be related to imbalance of the Liver meridian as well. The Liver and Gallbladder meridian pathways traverse the top and sides of the head, the most common sites for migraine headaches. The Qi of the Wood element flourishes in the spring when plants are sprouting new growth; and the color of this element is green.

# Fire

*Meridians:* Heart, Small Intestines, Pericardium, Triple  
Warmer



People with strong Fire energy may be quite charismatic. They excel at commanding others to action. They may love talking and socializing.

## *Fire Imbalance*

When the Fire Qi is weak, a person may be lackluster or bland. They may suffer from anxiety, restlessness, and insomnia. They may stutter, talk too much and too rapidly, or laugh nervously. They may be too excitable, easily stimulated to excesses, or they may be emotionally cold and unfeeling.

Common illnesses include palpitations, hypertension, heart problems, and sores on the mouth and tongue. People strongly influenced by the Fire element may be vulnerable in very hot weather, and may be calmed and centered by walking. The bitter flavor favors the Fire Qi. Coffee is a bitter flavor, but its effects may aggravate the Heart Qi. The healthy bitter flavors include dark, green leafy vegetables.

# Earth

*Meridians:* Stomach/Spleen



Someone with well developed Earth energy is a well grounded, nurturing, compassionate person, sometimes depicted as the archtypical “earth mother”. Earth people like to bring others together and make good mediators or peacemakers and reliable friends. They often enjoy both preparing food and eating. You may be attracted by their generous mouth and full, sensuous lips.

## *Earth Imbalance*

When people have weak Earth Qi, they can be worriers and meddlers. They are prone to pensiveness. They may overwork, especially in studying or other intellectual work. They are vulnerable to digestive problems and diarrhea. They may gain weight easily and lose it with difficulty. Their bodies have a tendency to make excessive mucus, and they may suffer from cloudy thinking, muzzy-headedness, and a lack of clarity.

Those with weak Earth Qi often feel better when they limit cold, raw foods and dairy products. They should eat warming foods and grains to stay well grounded. They may crave sweets. The sweet taste can be satisfied by eating sweet grains, vegetables, and fruits rather than processed sugars.

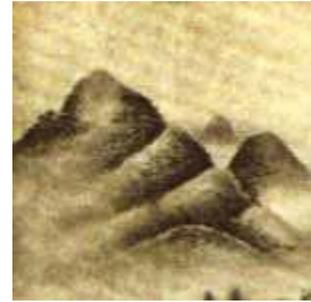
Common illnesses include: fatigue, diarrhea, gas & bloating, food allergies & sensitivities, eating disorders, heartburn, and canker sores. Excessive mucus may collect in the lungs or in the sinuses. In women, menstrual problems may include either excessively light or heavy periods.

The Qi of the earth element flourishes in Indian Summer, those golden moments of fullness before the waning of the light. The earth color is yellow, like the sun, and the ripened crops, and the root vegetables. Sitting meditation is said to strengthen the earth element.

# Metal

*Meridians:* Lungs/Large Intestines

A person with well balanced Metal energy is well organized, self disciplined, and conscientious. They like structure in their life. They are most comfortable in situations when they know the rules and can succeed by following them. Metal Qi bestows a deep inner strength, like ore mined from the mountains.



## *Metal Imbalance*

A person with Metal Qi imbalance may be grief-stricken, steeped in sadness. They may be overly critical. They may have trouble letting go. When the Metal energy is weak, there can be illnesses of the lungs – asthma, allergies, frequent colds. The Lung meridian rules the skin, so rashes, eczema, and problems with sweating can be related to Metal imbalance. The Large Intestine meridian can be affected by chronic constipation or diarrhea, or other bowel diseases.

The Metal energy peaks in the fall. In the cool, crisp, clean air of autumn, metal people feel they can accomplish anything. The color of Metal is white, and people strongly influenced by the Metal Qi may have pale complexions.

# Water

*Meridians:* Kidneys, Bladder



The Water energy is a strong generative force centered in the lower belly. When the Kidney Qi is strong, a person is fearless, determined, and can endure many hardships in pursuit of their goals. Persevering by will power is characteristic of those with strong Kidney Qi. Longevity is also considered to be associated with healthy Kidney Qi, signified by large, elongated ear lobes, like those of the Buddha.

## *Water Imbalance*

When the Kidney Qi is weak, there can be problems with water metabolism, urination, fertility, or sexuality. This person could be anxious, fearful, and withdrawn, and in more severe cases, phobic.

Kidney Qi declines with aging. There may be diminished hearing or ringing in the ears. In menopause, the Kidney yin declines, which is associated with classic signs of heat and dryness – hot flashes, night sweats, dry skin and mucous membranes. Kidney yang weakness is associated with cold – cold extremities, cold back and belly, declining sexual vigor, urinary frequency or incontinence.

The color of the Kidney is black, like the night, or like black ice. When the Kidney Qi starts to weaken, dark circles or pouches appear under the eyes. The Kidney Qi rules in the winter, a time when living things are contracted with cold. Like a seed deep in the cold ground, Qi is dormant, waiting for the time to sprout.