



# Guard Intestines & Protect Stomach

**Tzu Chi Chinese Medicine Team**



**Human anatomy is, in correspondence to the macrocosm, a microcosm.**

**Living in conflict with the natural flow of biology may lead to illness.**

**A clean stomach keeps diseases away. According to the principles of Chinese medicine, stomach is our foundation of acquired constitution, and the origin of our circulation of blood and energy.**

**New years and festivals, emergency rooms are crowded with patients with stomach discomfort.**

**Traditional Chinese Medicine physicians from the Tzu Chi hospitals suggest you ways to care for your stomach.**



### Dr. Wang Jen-Shu, Vice-Supt. of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital

The food ingested during holidays and festivities are often extravagant and high in calories. One must beware, though, that TCM dietary supplementation must be in accordance with one's constitution and symptoms with professional guidance from physicians and pharmacists. Many gastrointestinal diseases have complex pathogenesis, while climate changes may lead to earlier onsets of diseases. Gastrointestinal hemorrhage, cerebral hemorrhage, and peptic ulcer, for example, are common diseases in winter. Low temperature is a source of physical stress. As blood vessels contract from the cold, volume of blood flowing is reduced, blood volume in the stomach increases, internal pressure builds, and for patients with ulcers the exposed blood vessels may easily rupture. When coupled with binge eating, the odds of gastrointestinal hemorrhage and inflammation increase, worsening the original diseases.

### Stomach is the Foundation of Health

When speaking of spleen and stomach, the foundation of acquired constitution, TCM specifically points out that “a clean stomach keeps diseases away, a strong stomach keeps one healthy”. TCM refers to human anatomy as a microcosm, in correspondence to the macrocosm, the universe. The concept

originated from Dong Zhongshu in the Eastern Han Dynasty. From the study of “Gongyang Zhuan” , Mr. Gongyang's commentary on The Spring and Autumn Annals, he applied the five elements— metal, wood, water, fire, earth—to correspond with “Earth, Water, Fire, Wind”, in which metal refers to minerals, wood refers to botany, water includes oceans, rivers, and streams, fire refers to worldly flames and the sun, and earth as the earth we know.

The operation of the universe relies on sun and moon; the operation of the five elements relies on yin and yang. Judging from the material state, sun and moon forms the foundation for the dichotomy of yin and yang, hence the human anatomy naturally corresponds to the five elements in the worldly realm.”



**Vice Supt. Wang Jen-Shu of the Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital reminds the public to conserve the health of their stomach while enjoying vacation.**



**On Sept. 12, 2015, the 8th anniversary of the Dept. of TCM, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, Dir. Chen Chien-Chung led the team to practice eight-section brocade qigong.**

This theory, after various interpretations, gave birth to the theories of viscera state founded on the principles of yin-yang and five elements, which corresponds heart to fire, liver to wood, spleen to earth, lung to metal, kidney to water. Heart pulses to pump blood, therefore corresponds to fire, and shares an external-internal relation with small intestine; lung corresponds to metal, responsible for the regulation of energy (qi) and breathing, and shares an external-internal relation with large intestine; liver corresponds to wood, filters toxins like plants filter air, and shares an external-internal relations with gallbladder; kidney corresponds to water, and shares an external-internal relations with bladder; and spleen corresponds to earth, responsible for sustaining life, in charge of the digestive system much like earth absorbs food and water, and shares an

external-internal relations with stomach.

A simple description of the digestive system is that food is ingested through the mouth and enters esophagus after mastication; once it reaches stomach, the food is broken down through peristalsis from macromolecules to micromolecules ready for absorption. The food is then sent to small intestine where, with the cooperation of digestive juice from pancreas and hepatobiliary bile, it is decomposed and absorbed. About 90% of the water is absorbed by small intestine, leaving 10% for large intestine. The rest continues on to the rectum and is excreted from anus. This is the fundamental structure and functionality of our digestive system that employs physical and chemical methods to digest method. In TCM, we refer to it as “The Qi of Spleen Earth”.



In this human “digestive tract”, each location has its respective function that is indispensable. First, food is broken down in the mouth, then processes through chemical agitation and digestion again by gastric juice, small intestine enzyme. Pancreas can produce pancreatic fluid, trypsin digestive enzymes, and bile to facilitate fat absorption. The front end of the entire digestive system that initiates digestion is mouth. When mouth moves, stomach follows; when stomach has food, intestines follow. This animalistic physiological activity is the way humans and most species acquire nutrition,

produce energy for growth and survival. TCM has been referring to this acquisition of nutrition for the preservation of life as the “foundation of acquired constitution”.

### We Are What We Eat

Spleen and stomach, as vital as they are, can bring catastrophe on mind and body once damaged. The prevention of digestive diseases have intimate associations with food intake, emotional states, cooking methods, seasonal changes, quality control, and even defecation habits. Out of these factors, food intake plays a dominant role. One



**TCM pharmacists and pharmacists of the Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital would research or concoct medications according to clinical needs. The photo shows the longevity tea prepared by the TCM pharmacists during the Medicine Buddha day.**



**The multidimensional development of TCM, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, attracted foreign TCM physicians and medical students to visit.**

should refrain from fried, barbecued, and spicy food, as the adversity may affect the entire body. Research has shown that 30% of colorectal cancer cases are caused by red meat, followed by mastication. Chewing betel nuts, for example, may cause oral whitening, which increases the risk of oral cancer; frequent consumption of alcohol and spirits can drastically increase the risk of esophageal cancer. These are inappropriate diet that could have lasting impact on the digestive system.

The preservation of food is equally important in healthy diet, as inappropriate preservation may lead to disease. Bacteria in rotten meats produce toxins

and salmonella that can cause acute gastroenteritis; allergic foods can lead to skin rash and diarrhea; high temperature can burn esophagus; low temperature can cause gastrointestinal allergies, stomach swelling, and other issues.

**Dietary Methods Are Important**

Oral cavity is a vital organ that integrates mechanical and chemical digestion, and is therefore placed in the front line of the system. Controlled through the 5th pair of cerebral nerves and accessory nerves, teeth chew the food, produce saliva to break down starch and enzymes, macromolecules are broken



down and delivered to stomach.

Inside the oral cavity are three glands: sublingual, submandibular, parotid glands. All 6 pairs of salivary glands are involved in the digestion, decomposition, bacteriolysis, and heat preservation of food through chemical actions. Conversely, poor chewing habits could be a major pathological cause of gastric inflammation and ulcer. If foods are not thoroughly broken down and digested while in oral cavity, stomach, which is simply a cyst, would be overstressed from digesting large chunks of food. Foods that are too hot, too cold, or too stimulating can apparently cause inflammation, which, over a long period of time, would lead to gastric acid erosion of the stomach wall, and eventually the formation of acute and chronic gastritis ulcers or pylori infection.

Physical needs tend to operate in a way of its own. Once the methods are wrong, disease may ensue. Many white collars sit all day long, exposing themselves to high risk of constipation. In fact, intestines will not move if stomach is empty. Many people have constipation because they eat too less. Without any fiber, stomach does not have the opportunity to deliver message to large intestines; and without intestines moving, defecation would be impossible. Fundamentally speaking, one has to chew slowly for the sake of one's stomach. Only with enough loading in the stomach would

the intestines move, hence the oral-gastric and gastrointestinal reflexes. Building an accurate understanding of these two concepts is the path to longevity. In TCM, we call it the "stomach qi".

### **Sthenia and Asthenia**

Approximately 10% to 20% of the Taiwanese population suffers from Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) (the global prevalence rate of IBS is 15%). In TCM symptoms are divided into two categories: Sthenia and asthenia. Treatments for each category vary accordingly, adhering to the philosophy of TCM, "syndrome differentiation and treatment". Emotional stress complicated with gastric juice secretion disorders, which induces increased defecation, abdominal distension, and flaky stool, is diagnosed by the TCM as asthenic allergy, and the appropriate counterstrategy is soothing the liver and fortify the spleen, invigorate the center (spleen and stomach), replenish qi (increase body energy), and reach the desired goal, reduce peristalsis and increase absorption by regulating autonomic nerves and emotional sensitivity.

As for sthenic allergy, which is common in youth, the symptoms are nervousness, red and dry lips, agitated at night, fast pulses, sensitive stomach, mucous inflammation, and



**The TCM team of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital participates actively in community health screening and medical outreach.**



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frequent diarrhea with cold or hot stimulants. In this case, TCM would recommend the removal of intestinal heat, mucosal congestion, and nervous sensitivity. Any types of asthenic symptoms require replenishment, like how dogs bark when hungry, for example, and feeding it would resolve the issue. Conversely, students drinking intestine-clearing scutellaria decoction prior to examinations could reduce gastrointestinal sensitivity, and calms the pre-examination nervousness.

Clinically speaking, TCM has many prescriptions that target gastrointestinal issues by facilitate digestion, stimulate gastrointestinal peristalsis (flow of qi), and enhancing gastrointestinal circulation and nerve invigoration (warming replenishment). Constipation common in old people is generally caused by a dynamic bowel. Through the process of syndrome differentiation and treatment, one would focus on the therapeutic treatment with warming and replenishment, intestine moistening, and qi circulation.

### **Chew 30 Times Per Bite to Longevity**

Whether it is TCM or western medicine, medications only target symptoms no matter how effective they are. As for root causes, fundamental

changes to daily life is essential. An association in Japan has proposed a rather effective strategy. They encourage that one should chew thirty-times over a thirty-second duration every bite, a method that can prevent the ingestion of food too hot or too cold and facilitate digestion through adequate salivation. In simple terms, the strategy fully utilized organ functions, engage in physical and chemical digestions with proper chewing. Many elderlies who live a long life are salivated even though they are not eating. Drink your water in 10 seconds, hold it in your mouth for 20 seconds before swallowing it down, and that is the way.

Trees prosper with the earth as foundation, spring blossoms are the result of seasonal changes, such is the operation of cosmic. In the beginning of a year, listening to the vital message from the earth. The path to longevity that TCM proposes is to mind the operation of the microcosm, providing one's body with proper diet, attend to one's spleen and stomach that are the foundation of acquired constitution, absorb adequate nutrients, and perfect health comes naturally.

### **Integration of East and West**

Taiwan has been advancing the modernization of TCM and the



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implementation of Chinese and Western Integrative Medicine for half a century. In the four years since the founding of the School of Post-Baccalaureate Chinese Medicine, TCU, a two-track education approach was taken with TCM as main and Western medicine as auxiliary. Graduated students from the School are fully capable of utilizing their comprehension and application of all the professional knowledge and equipment modern medicine has to offer in their diagnosis, analysis, and treatment, integrating fully with TCM to provide modernized integrative medical service.

In 2012, the CEO Office of the Tzu Chi Medical Foundation founded the “TCM research & development team”. At the same time, the Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital also established the “Chinese and Western Clinical Integrative Medicine Research Center”. The clinical scope of the integrative medicine includes neural/brain trauma, oncology, dermatology, pulmonary diseases, and gastroenterology. Many projects on integrative researches are currently underway.



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