



KATIE BRINDLE

Autoimmune Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



What is Autoimmune Disease?

The immune system is the body's protection against harmful substances such as bacteria, viruses and toxins. To fight these invaders, the immune system produces and sends antibodies (special proteins) to identify and destroy the antigens.

In some cases, the immune system cannot distinguish between healthy tissue and harmful antigens and, as a result, it attacks and destroys normal tissue. This autoimmune reaction (or 'attack') is what triggers the development of an autoimmune disease. The exact cause is unknown, but there are more than 80 different types of autoimmune disease. 1 Some of the main ones include Addison's disease, Coeliac disease, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, multiple sclerosis, reactive arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, and type 1 diabetes. Symptoms vary greatly depending on the type, but common ones can include fatigue, fever, general malaise, joint pain and skin rashes.

Autoimmune diseases should be taken very seriously. Since they destroy healthy body tissue, they can also affect organ function or result in abnormal growth of a vital organ. While Western medicine does not offer any cures, most can be treated and symptoms alleviated through lifestyle, medication, hormone replacement and avoiding things that trigger flare-ups

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The Yang Sheng perspective

'Yang Sheng' means 'nurture life'. It is the 'self-care' part of Chinese medicine: the part you can do for yourself, as a complement to any other treatment you may be undertaking.

In addition to physical (visible) symptoms, in Chinese medicine we also consider what is happening with the body at an energetic (invisible) level. 'Qi' (pronounced 'tchee') is the energy that runs through all of us. Even when you sit completely still, there will be some movement happening inside you: your heart is beating, your fluids moving – every cell is constantly in motion. All of these different types of energy, combined with your breath, is what makes up your 'qi'.

Qi isn't the same as circulation, but they are linked. When you stimulate your blood flow or move your lymphatic fluid, your qi is also stimulated. Everything flows together. The channels in which qi flows are called meridians. According to Chinese medicine, the quality and movement of qi through the body determines your health.

The ideal state is one of smooth flow with no imbalances or blockages, which are called 'stagnation' or stagnant qi. If you have stagnation, whether physical, emotional or spiritual, this will eventually manifest as disease.

The immune system has three main functions: 1) to defend the body from harmful substances, 2) to monitor damaged, aged and mutated cells and clear them away, and 3) to recognize what is a non-threat so it does not destroy the body's own healthy tissue.

In people with autoimmune issues, their monitor and self-tolerance functions are in disorder. Western treatments for autoimmune diseases generally focus on reducing symptoms and therefore further reducing the immune system's natural activity. However, Chinese medicine thinks rebalancing the immune system is key in this instance.

To understand autoimmune disease, we must try to understand why the immune system is attacking the body's own tissues instead of fighting infections. This, according to Chinese medicine, is due to a lack of Zheng qi. This type of qi is derived from eating healthy foods. Since the stomach and spleen are responsible for the digestion and intake process, taking more care of our digestive system will help our body will protect itself more efficiently.

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Steps you can take to help

General advice

Chinese breathing and bodywork techniques have both been scientifically proven to be effective in reducing stress and supporting the body. They:

Engage your parasympathetic nervous system

Regulate blood flow

Reduce heat in the body

Calm the nervous system

Strengthen the organs

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Breath

The single most effective way to reduce your stress levels is to take conscious, deep, abdominal breaths. By moving your awareness out of your head and into your breath, your heart rate slows, your mind is calmed, and your blood oxygenated.

[View the Breath Guide](#)

Qigong

Qigong is a fundamental pillar of Chinese medicine. It is classed as a form of internal exercise. Internal exercise is any combination of slow, considered movements with breath and mental engagement, it's often referred to as 'Chinese yoga'. Qigong is, quite simply, the ultimate selfhealing technique. Whatever your issue, qigong will help to rebalance the body. By learning to manipulate qi around the body, you rejuvenate and energise, lower the heart rate and blood pressure and support the immune system.

[View the Qigong Guide](#)

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Tapping

Tapping with bamboo is an ancient Chinese therapy that works wonders for your general wellbeing. It's a simple, pleasurable, yet hugely effective way to support and maintain your health, no matter what your age or physical state. Tapping the skin on a daily basis enables the free flow of this all-important circulation. In as little as one minute a day, an all over body tap can clear areas of stagnation, support lymphatic drainage and encourage a smooth flow of blood and qi around the body. Think of it as a natural battery charger for the body.

[View the Tapping Guide](#)

Gua sha

Gua sha is a therapeutic healing technique that has been widely practised in China for thousands of years. It involves using a round-edged tool, traditionally made from materials such as jade or metal, to pressstroke the skin until redness appears. You can even use a jam jar lid! Gua sha has been used to treat a whole range of conditions from fever to chronic cough and migraines. It has been shown in studies to increase micro-circulation by 400%, and clear inflammation. Note that gua sha should NOT be used directly on broken skin. However, it can be effective to lessen the marks left by an acne outbreak. There are lots of how-to gua sha videos on my Instagram feed; and you can also download the Gua Sha Guide.

[View the Gua sha Guide](#)

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Meditation

Meditation is a fundamental pillar of Chinese medicine and studies have confirmed a host of health benefits. If you struggle with traditional forms of meditation, there are simple Chinese techniques that offer impressive results.

[View the Meditation Guide](#)

Specific advice

Any symptoms of ill health will always relate to one of the five key organs we consider when we are treating in Chinese medicine. These are Heart, Lung, Liver, Stomach/Spleen and Kidney.

Depending on what your symptoms are, it will usually indicate an imbalance in a specific organ. For example, palpitations are concerned with the heart.

An energetic imbalance does not mean you have a dramatic health issue. This aspect of Chinese medicine is about prevention, not cure. That means reading the subtle signs and symptoms of the body daily. Imbalance starts at an energetic level and you rectify it at an energetic level.

The more serious the symptoms, the deeper the imbalance. If the symptom is mild – e.g. low-level anxiety before a meeting or mild rosacea after a glass of red wine, the imbalance will be easier to rectify.

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It is important to know that when I refer to organ imbalance, I mean energetic and not physical. So, for example, heart imbalance does not mean heart disease. It is a subtle signal that your body is not in balance and the strain of that is impacting your heart energy, which may eventually lead to an issue over time. In the first instance, it could be felt as low level anxiety, occasional palpitations or a lack of desire to socialise. We look for the low level signs to stop things getting a foothold in the body and causing a greater problem further down the line.

Use low levels symptoms as a barometer of your wellness. Address them to keep the body healthy and they are much less likely to become a deeper issue. This is the principle behind yang sheng and self-care.

A weak digestive system can lead to chronic acne. In Chinese medicine, spleen and stomach are directors of the digestion, absorption and transmission of nutrition and water, for the need of human life activities of the various organs. If they are not functioning well, what we eat cannot be absorbed by the body properly and it may become toxic waste such as phlegm. When the waste wants to get out of the body, the face can create 'volcanic vents'.

[View the Stomach & Spleen Guide](#)

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Want to know more?

We will be delighted to support you as you continue along your Yang Sheng journey. The following will get you started:

'Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing' available on Amazon, Waterstone and www.hayoumethod.com

[Buy Yang Sheng Book](#)

Qigong Healing classes (3 x each week) for a more in-depth and healing practice – full details on www.hayoufit.com

Free Masterclass "[Master Your Health](#)" – understand the 3- step plan for preventative health. Find more Qigong Masterclasses [here](#).

John Munro [Cleansing The Energy Field Masterclass](#)

Free self-care weekly content [@katiebrindle](#) on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Free regular gua sha demonstrations on [@thehayoumethod](#) Instagram & the opportunity to purchase the accompanying tools from www.hayoumethod.com

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that any of these Yang Sheng techniques are designed to support your overall self-care and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for any Western medical advice or treatment that you may be receiving. You should not use the information in this Guide or on our website for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease and must always consult your doctor if you have any health concerns. Additionally, please note that there are a few contraindications to Yang Sheng techniques, so please visit www.hayoumethod.com to view our comprehensive FAQs.

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