



KATIE BRINDLE

Kidney Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



What is the function of the Kidneys?

The Kidneys are two bean-shaped organs, each about the size of a fist. They sit just below the rib cage, one on either side of our spine. Healthy Kidneys remove waste and extra fluid from our blood, efficiently filtering around half a cup of blood every minute. This waste is then combined with water and other substances to produce urine, which is sent down two tubes, the ureters, to our bladder to be excreted. The Kidneys also remove acid produced by the body and maintain a healthy balance of water, salts, and minerals in the blood. If this delicate balance is not maintained, our muscles, tissues and nerves cannot work effectively. Kidneys also produce a hormone called erythropoietin (EPO) which helps to control our blood pressure, it also produces red blood cells in the bone marrow, keeping our bones healthy and strong.

If our Kidneys aren't working efficiently we be at higher risk of experiencing health concerns such as:

- Pericarditis
 - Hyperkalaemia
 - Anaemia and fatigue
 - Swollen feet/ankles and muscle cramp
 - Dry, scaly skin and thinning hair, and sagging skin around the jaw and chin
 - Poor sleep, poor appetite or loss of appetite
 - Frequent urination or change in urine output
 - Water retention
 - Night sweats
 - Back pain
 - Memory loss or lack of concentration
 - Dizziness or vertigo
 - Tinnitus and/or deafness
 - Sexual dysfunction
- Chronic kidney disease
 - Urinary tract infections or other urinary issues
 - Kidney stones or polycystic kidney disease

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Chinese Wisdom

From a Chinese medicine perspective, Kidney health is so much more than just physical health. The Kidneys are the power pack of energy in the body; a reserve of additional qi, known as pre-natal essence, which is inherited from our parents. When other organs are low on energy they are able to call on this 'inheritance', to keep them functioning. The partner organ of the Kidneys is the Bladder and for the purposes of this guide can be viewed as a single organ.

In Chinese culture, the Kidneys are often called the 'Root of Life', and people are always very careful to look after them.

The Kidneys have many functions in Chinese medicine over and above processing urine, such as responsibility for the overall ageing process. They also oversee fertility, libido, hearing, hair health, willpower and wisdom. The Kidneys are known as the 'Ministers of Power' and are regarded as the body's most important reservoir of essential energy, or jing. They are attributed with a role of managing our constitutional health – which is what keeps us going if we have skipped breakfast or had a poor night's sleep. When the energy of the Kidneys is depleted, this will eventually manifest in health concerns.

In Chinese wisdom, looking after our kidneys is of paramount importance for good health. They are depleted by the cold; for example, low slung trousers, not wearing a vest, walking in bare feet, and particularly cold weather. Excessive sexual activity or multiple pregnancies can also impact Kidney health.

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The importance of qi

In addition to physical symptoms of Kidney imbalance, in Chinese medicine we also consider what is happening with the body at an energetic, or invisible, level. Qi is the energetic and vital life force that continually flows through us underpinning our physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellbeing – it is the basis for our very existence. Like feelings and emotions qi can't be seen, yet it penetrates every part of our body at every moment. Even when we sit completely still, there will be some movement happening inside us. Our heart beats, fluids move, and every cell is constantly in motion. All these different types of energy, combined with our breath, is what makes up our qi. Qi isn't the same as circulation, but it is linked. When we stimulate our blood flow or move our lymphatic fluid, our qi is also stimulated, with everything flowing together through our meridians, the energetic pathways that run throughout the body.

It is the quality and movement of qi that determines our health. Smooth flowing qi and blood around the body will ensure that there are no blockages of energy, negativity or toxicity, leading to stagnation. If stagnation is left untended, whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual, low-level niggles will be able to gain a foothold in the body, eventually manifesting as disease.

The Role of Emotions

In Chinese medicine, we recognise that our emotions are connected to specific organs. We can't see emotions, but we feel and then physically express them. The overriding emotions connected with the Kidneys are fear and nervousness.

Imbalances in our Kidney energy does not mean kidney disease, but it is a subtle indication that our body is not in harmony and needs to be nourished to avoid our emotional health negatively impacting our physical health.

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Kidney Yin and Kidney Yang

It is important for us to understand that the Kidneys hold two types of essence, Kidney yang and Kidney yin. A lack of either can cause imbalances, which will eventually manifest as health problems. Kidney yang is in charge of energy, whilst Kidney yin is in charge of body fluid. If we imagine the human body as a car, the Kidney yang would be the engine, and Kidney yin would be the petrol and motor oil. So, if we have depleted Kidney yang energy then it is as if our engine isn't working properly, so the car can't move very quickly. Whereas a lack of Kidney yin energy would mean there isn't enough petrol and motor oil, resulting in wear and tear of the machinery.

Signs of Kidney yang deficiency can include:

- Cold body – cold limbs, cold abdomen, poor circulation, irregular menstruation, pale complexion.
- Soreness and pain – mostly at the waist and knees, and lower back soreness or weakness.

- Lack of energy – easily fatigued, often tired, out of sorts or with a weak digestion.
- Frequent urination, especially at night, urine in greater amounts than usual, pale urine, oedema on lower limbs, or loose stools.

Signs of Kidney yin deficiency can include:

- Hot body – hot hands and feet, or a burning feeling in the chest
- Frequent feelings of anger or irritability
- Thirsty, dry mouth, scanty dark urine, dry stools, or constipation
- Quick to sweat and night sweats
- High blood pressure

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Yang Sheng techniques and what you can do to help yourself

There are many things that you can do to support, nurture and nourish your Kidney energy:

- Rest. Kidneys need rest more than anything in order to conserve and build up their qi. Find time every day to just be still and rest. Ideally this would be in the afternoon, between 3 – 5pm either as a short nap or as meditation.
- Sleep. As well as a rest in the afternoon, achieving good, restorative sleep every night will be vital to the health of your Kidneys.
- Kidneys need additional rest during the winter season, so take advantage of the long evenings to have an early night whenever you can.
- Other than sleep, meditation and breathwork are the best things that you can do to support your Kidneys. Even a minute or two of the Rescue Breath will be beneficial; a 20 minute meditation, even better. As you meditate, do the smiling breaths into your Kidneys.
- Establish quiet alone time to have a relaxing a bath or read a book – or to just enjoy the silence.
- Practice the healing sounds for the Kidneys whilst visualising an inky blue colour. Place your hands over your Kidneys; one hand either side of your spine at waist level, and see your Kidneys as being balanced and strong. Sense their wisdom as you make the sound Chooo.
- Regular qigong practice, especially 'Bow Man on Horse, Shooting Eagle' from 12 Rivers, or the Snake sequence from Animal Play, will strengthen and balance your Kidney energy.
- Stomp your feet or raise your heels off the floor for a few minutes each day. This will stimulate both the Kidney and Bladder meridians, both of which run through the heel to the toe of the foot.
- Rub or massage your ears. The sensory organ associated with the Kidneys are the ears, which is why depleted Kidney energy can manifest as deafness, tinnitus or ear infections. This simple massage technique can help to strengthen Kidney function.

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- The element associated with the Kidneys is water, so spend time near the sea, a lake or river, or even a water feature! Swimming is also very beneficial.
- Wear jewellery in shades of black, and if you like gemstones choose black sapphire, black onyx, black pearl or black tourmaline.
- Have a fish tank at home to echo the watery nature of the Kidneys.
- Listen to inspirational talks or learn philosophy – this will resonate with the wisdom of the Kidneys.
- Be brave – face your fears and put them into perspective.
- Transcend emotions as much as you can by recognising that you feel a negative emotion and replacing it with a positive one. Harmful emotions for the Kidneys are fear, shock, anxiety, insecurity, and lack of willpower, so try and replace them with the healing emotions of wisdom, gentleness and stillness.

The Role of Emotions

As well as the suggestions above, there are certain foods that are beneficial for Kidney health:

- Make sure that you are drinking an adequate amount of high quality, filtered water.
- Avoid excess salt in your diet.
- Try and include plenty of black vegetables and fruits in your diet.

If you have Kidney yang deficiency, the following foods will be beneficial:

- Nuts – walnuts, chestnuts, cashew nuts, pine nut, pecan nuts, hazelnuts.
- Fruit – goji berries, raspberries.

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- Meat/dairy/egg – chicken, beef, beef marrow, beef bones, lamb, lamb bones, bone broth, venison, goose eggs.
- Fish – eel.
- Beans and pulses – adzuki beans.
- Condiments and seasonings – cinnamon, fennel.
- Limit cold food and food with a cold nature, such as mung beans, raw leaves, melon, grapefruit and mint.

If you have Kidney yin deficiency, the following foods will be beneficial:

- Fruit – mulberry, grapes, pears, chamomile, blueberries, purple and black grapes, black fungus, umeboshi.
- Vegetables – celery, beets.
- Meat/dairy/eggs – milk, pork, duck, boiled egg.
- Fish – seabass, prawns, caviar, scallops, oysters, clams and mussels.
- Grain – black rice, barley, buckwheat, black lentils.
- Beans and pulses – black sesame, black beans.
- Sea vegetables – arame, dulse, Irish moss, kelp, hijiki, nori, wakame, kombu, spirulina.
- Condiments and seasonings – tamari, shoyu, miso, tekka. Incorporate some miso soup, seaweed and bone broth into your diet, 2-3 times a week.
- Limit greasy food as much as possible.

There is a wealth of information in my book, "[Yang Sheng – The Art of Chinese Self-Healing](#)".

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How to Use the Organ Guide

Practising the Hayo'u Method is a basic daily level of health maintenance, like brushing your teeth. You are responsible for it, you do it every day and it maintains your basic dental health.

Niggling issues such as poor sleep or digestion are the equivalent of bleeding gums. At this point, you might see the hygienist for a little help. This is when you employ the quick fixes in our guides.

[View the How to Use the Organ 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

Download 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](#).

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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