



KATIE BRINDLE

Spleen & Stomach Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



What is the function of the Spleen & Stomach?

The Stomach is the first stop in our digestive tract. Our Stomach lining secretes enzymes and acids that break down food and work to kill any harmful microbes we may have ingested. As well as digesting food, it also stores it when necessary. The Spleen is the largest organ in our lymphatic system, filtering blood and removing old or damaged cells. It also works with the lymph nodes to detect infection and produce white blood cells to boost immunity.

If our Spleen & Stomach, and therefore digestive system, isn't working efficiently we can develop what is known as Spleen qi deficiency and we be at higher risk of experiencing health concerns such as:

- Digestive problems, loss of appetite or abnormal appetite
- Abdominal distention after eating
- Difficulty in losing or gaining weight
- Prone to bruising
- Loose stools or blood in the stools and urine
- Poor muscle tone and weakness in limbs
- Heavy, cold or swollen limbs
- Fatigue or low energy
- Tendency towards mucus
- Menstrual irregularities
- Bleeding gums or bad breath

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Chinese Wisdom

From a Chinese medicine perspective Spleen & Stomach health is so much more than just physical health. Chronic stress, worry, and anxiety can be extremely harmful to the efficient functioning of the Spleen & Stomach and without this proper functioning we can easily begin to suffer from poor digestive health, low metabolism function and fatigue.

In Chinese medicine, the Spleen & Stomach are a functioning pair of organs that control digestion and the absorption processes in our body. The Stomach is responsible not only for digesting, assimilating and processing our food and drink, but also for digesting our emotions and thoughts. For example, we might say 'Let me just digest that information' or 'I'll chew over that problem'.

The Spleen governs transformation and transportation; its main function being to transform food and liquids into nourishment in the form of qi and nutrients to then be transported around the whole body. The Spleen also governs the movement of blood, ensuring it flows along its proper pathways in the blood vessels, and it is this blood that delivers nourishment to the muscles and carries away waste products. A healthy and balanced Spleen & Stomach will ensure a healthy digestive system and strong muscles and limbs.

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The importance of qi

In addition to physical symptoms of Spleen & Stomach 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.

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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. As our Spleen & Stomach control thinking, the emotion most connected with these organs is worry.

Imbalances in our Spleen & Stomach energy does not mean spleen or stomach 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. Signs that we have Spleen & Stomach qi imbalances can include:

- Excessive worry
- Overthinking or dwelling on things
- Confusion
- Anxiety
- Being overly sympathetic

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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 Spleen & Stomach energy:

- Rest, sleep, and calm the mind with meditation and the Rescue Breath, or perhaps some soothing music. Concentrate on your breath and if thoughts run through your mind, acknowledge them and let them go.
- Try not to dwell on problems – set aside 30 minutes each day to focus on problem solving and then move on.
- Practice the healing sound for the Spleen & Stomach whilst visualising the colour yellow. Place your hands at the base of your ribs on the left side of your torso and imagine your Spleen & Stomach qi strong and balanced as you make the sound Whooo.
- Regular qigong practice, especially the Leopard move from Animal Play or “Crane looks behind” from 12 Rivers, will nourish your Spleen & Stomach energy, keeping it strong and balanced.
- Gua sha down the outer leg, all the way from the hip to the toe. This will stimulate many of the acupoints on the Spleen meridian. Then work down the front of the leg, again right from the front of the hip down to the middle toe, as this is where the Stomach meridian runs.
- Rubbing your abdomen in a clockwise direction warms up your centre, stimulating the Spleen & Stomach qi to aid digestion to reduce bloating. Try 10 circles a day.
- Designate areas in your home as ‘worry-free zones’, write a list of the things you are most grateful for and reflect on them.
- Consider doing some volunteer work to focus on empathy and care for others. Focusing on the needs of others can be helpful in putting your own problems into perspective.

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- Do some gardening or play games such as Sudoku or Mahjong.
- The element associated with the Spleen & Stomach is earth, so enjoy a relaxing walk, ideally in nature, and appreciate the experience.
- Visit the mountains or change your screensaver to an image of mountains.
- Have some stone ornaments at home.
- Wear jewellery in shades of yellow. If you like gemstone, choose a yellow one with good clarity, such as citrine, lemon quartz, yellow sapphire or yellow topaz.
- 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 Spleen & Stomach are worry, confusion, overthinking and being overly sympathetic, so try and replace them with the healing emotions of trust, openness, being nurturing and contentment.

What to eat to help your Spleen and Stomach

A strong, well balanced digestive system is of paramount importance to our overall health and wellbeing, yet it is often sabotaged by our modern lifestyle of imbalanced diets, eating late at night, yo-yo dieting, stress and worry. As well as the suggestions above, there are certain foods and eating styles that are beneficial for Spleen & Stomach health, these include:

- Millet, Chinese yam, potatoes, wheat – wheat, and wheat flour products such as noodles, can soothe the digestive system.
- If taken in correct quantities, sweet foods such as rice, cabbage, carrots, pumpkins, courgettes, melon and honey have a tonifying effect. Extremely sweet foods in large quantities weaken Spleen & Stomach qi and have a dampening effect.

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- Food in shades of yellow, sweet flavours and root vegetables nurture the digestive system, including – apple, apricot, beef, beetroot, cabbage, carrot, celery, cherries, chicken, chickpeas, courgettes, corn, cucumber, dates, grapes, grapefruit, honey, kidney beans, lamb, lettuce, malt, mandarin, milk, mushrooms, oats, orange, peach, peanuts, pear, pineapple, plum, pork, potato, radish, raspberries, rice, spinach, strawberries, sugar, tomato, walnut, wheat, chestnut, egg, turnip, date, pumpkin, Osmanthus flower tea.
- People often crave sweets and chocolate because of Spleen & Stomach qi deficiency. This can quickly become a vicious circle; the more depleted these organs, the more cravings you have, weakening your system further.
- To help your digestive system always eat cooked meals as the warmth of the food enables the digestive system to break down food more easily.
- Whole, cooked foods are generally recommended, and raw foods or dairy products should be avoided or at least limited as these are classified as cold and/or damp forming.
- One green juice a day is OK but generally avoid relying too heavily on juicing as a meal replacement.
- Simply chewing your food well puts less pressure on your spleen. Chewing obviously stimulates the production of saliva, which Chinese wisdom considers incredibly important for your health.

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

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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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