



FIVE ELEMENTS

土

EARTH
SPLEEN

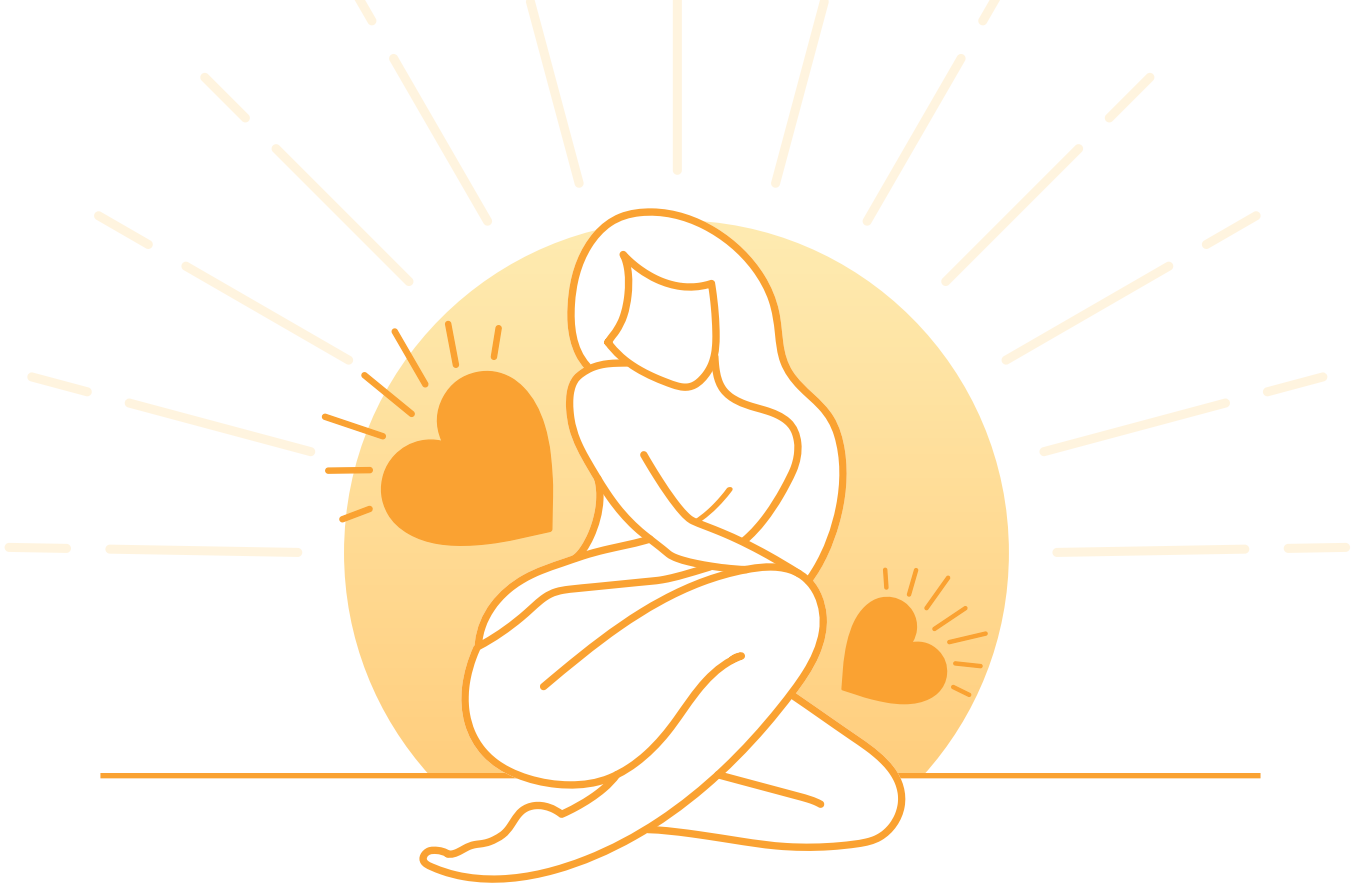
YANG SHENG

ANCIENT HEALTH WISDOM
FOR NOURISHING LIFE



BALANCED
WITH DR. MAZ

 [balanced_with_drmaz](https://www.instagram.com/balanced_with_drmaz)



SIGNS YOUR SPLEEN MAY LIKE SOME LOVE

- bloating, cramping, pain
- diarrhoea or constipation
- low appetite, queasy
- tired after meals
- malabsorption, anaemia and nutrient deficiencies
- weight imbalances
- phlegm, cough
- fatigue, heavy limbs
- prolapse, varicose veins
- heavy periods, leukorrhoea, spotting, dragging cramps
- brain fog, apathy
- fluid retention
- constant thirst
- drippy nose



This e-book has been created to provide a peek into the time-tested health wisdom of Chinese Medicine, with simple lifestyle hacks that you can implement today for more vitality and a balanced body-mind-soul.

Chinese Medicine (CM) is a complete and holistic system of health, with a continuous history of several thousand years. It recognises that we are all unique, and seeks to optimise the overall balance and function of an individual, rather than solely managing or suppressing symptoms. Instead, symptoms are viewed as important messages - or clues - as to what is causing the underlying imbalance. Armed with these nuggets of insight, a CM doctor will dig deep to unearth the root cause of a presentation.

While a CM doctor will offer treatment to support healing, the wonderful and empowering thing about this medicine is that **a big part of the healing is up to us! Each choice that we make** in how we live our lives and nourish ourselves with food, relationships, activities, emotions **can be an investment into our vitality and joy.** And in listening to our body-mind-souls, we become more attuned to their whispers and optimising how we live fully!

Before we learn more about some simple choices we can make to support our wellbeing, let's take a quick look at some of the terms you may have noted on the cover - and let's see how they are relevant to what we are about to learn...

The background features a large, stylized orange sun with radiating lines. Below the sun, a hand is depicted holding a scroll. The entire scene is rendered in a monochromatic orange color scheme.

YANG SHENG

literally means

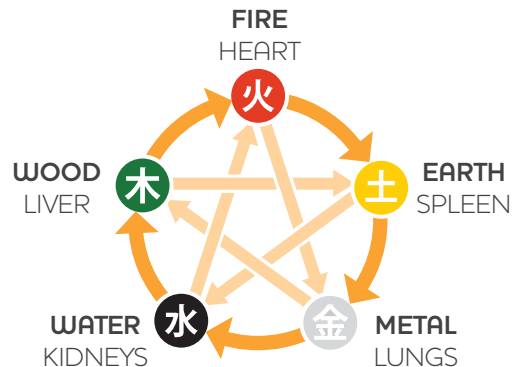
“Nourishing Life”

and refers to the nutritional and lifestyle medicine that is one of the pillars of Chinese Medicine (CM).

CM views Yang Sheng as the highest form of medicine, as nourishing body-mind-soul can prevent imbalance and stop disease before it takes hold.

FIVE ELEMENTS

Many of us will be familiar with the Yin-Yang symbol (at bottom) and with the concept of Yin-Yang as complementary and opposite forces, that are in constant interplay with each other, i.e. day to night, summer to winter, full to empty, and back again. Yin-Yang is also used as a lens to view the state of health and balance in the body.



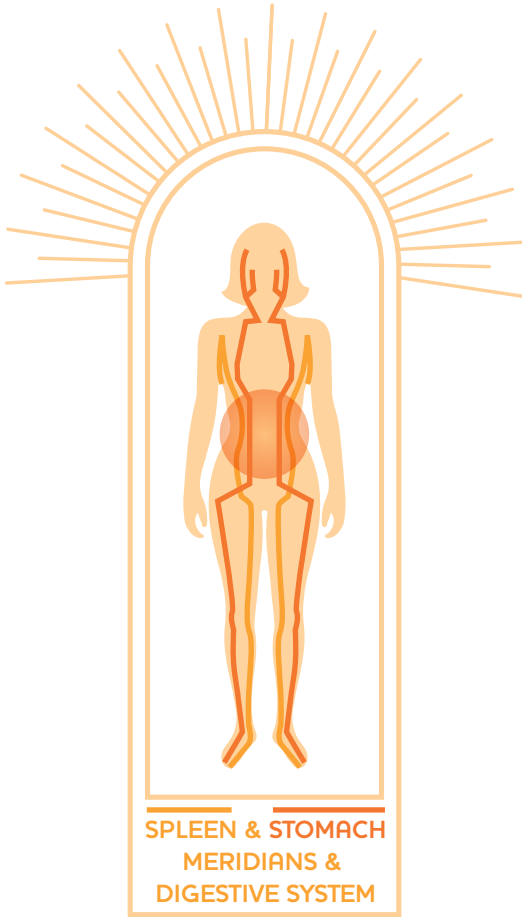
Another lens that we use to assess the state of an individual's health is that of the Five Elements. Like Yin-Yang, this concept also stems from Taoist philosophy, and is informed by the study of nature and the world around us. It provides another layer of information, beyond Yin-Yang. Each Element is associated with a season, colour, function in the body-mind-soul, emotion and flavour (amongst other qualities). Each Element is also ascribed to one of the organ systems of CM, eg. Earth relates to the Spleen*.



As you can see in the diagram at top, the Elements “generate” each other in a clockwise direction, i.e. Wood feeds Fire, and Fire becomes (ash) Earth. There is also a “controlling” cycle (arrows in the centre), by which the Five Elements keep each other in check, i.e. Wood anchors Earth (protects against erosion), and Earth contains Water (like the banks of a river). Using this lens, we can differentiate what might be causing a weakness or imbalance of one of the Elements. In the example of Earth, it could be a weakness of Earth, or not enough Fire to generate it, or Wood being over-controlling - identifying this is part of choosing the best approach to bring back balance.

* The term “Spleen” is capitalised to differentiate it from its biomedical counterpart, the spleen organ. In CM, “Spleen” refers not only to the organ itself, but also encompasses an intricate organ-tissue-biofield system that governs a range of metabolic, energetic and psychoemotional functions, and includes the musculoskeletal pathway of the Spleen channel.

EARTH & SPLEEN



Earth provides a foundation for all of the other Elements, as healthy digestion is a foundation for whole body health. Echoing ancient wisdom, we are now learning that a healthy microbiome* is the basis for strong immunity, balanced moods, clear mind and consistent energy. The Five Elements lens acknowledges this by linking Earth with the Spleen system. The Spleen (Yin) is partnered by the Stomach (Yang), which is also included under the Earth umbrella.

Earth is associated with the colour yellow, and likes to be well-hydrated - but not flooded! Earth can be overwhelmed by damp weather or mouldy environments, and for this reason is linked with late Summer (when it benefits from extra care, to protect it from getting swampy).

Earth digests not only our food, but also life experiences and learnings, and can get bogged down by over-thinking, worry, heavy study and over-consumption of content in general. To help process, it benefits from rhythm and routine.

The “direction” associated with Earth is containment, and so it keeps various bits (like organs, tissues, skin) in their correct place. It also controls Water to manage fluid metabolism, and keeps the Blood** moving in its rightful pathways. It also governs flesh and muscle, and we say that the Spleen nourishes the limbs to allow them to feel strong and energetic.

*The microbiome refers to the sum total of microbes (microorganisms such as bacteria or fungi) that live in, or on, our bodies. The vast majority of these are found in the large intestine, and have a combined weight of up to 1.5kg, equating to about 100 trillion bacteria! So, in a healthy human, microbial cells outnumber “human” cells by a factor of 10 to 1!! The microbiome is highly individual (like a fingerprint!) and changes over time, responding to environmental factors, stress and diet.


** Yep, you guessed it! Blood in CM is more than just a red liquid that flows through our veins (a topic for another time!)

SPLEEN LOVE TIPS



COOKED, WARM FOOD AND DRINK

We often hear it said that “you are what you eat”, but if the Spleen is overloaded, that may not quite be the case. A more accurate statement might be “you are what you can digest”, and the more powerful our digestion, the more nutrients we can absorb, leading to more vitality and energy.



The digestive tract is lined with muscles that help to process our food. Many of us have experienced firsthand that warming up our muscles can help them to work more efficiently - and that a cold, cramped and contracted muscle not only aches, but doesn't deliver the same power. Our digestions are no different! Each time we choose to eat or drink something warmer than body temperature, we are supporting digestive efficiency. Another handy image to visualise is that of the digestion as a cooking fire - every time we eat cooked and warm food, we are drawing on our vital cooking fire reserves much less than if we were to eat a big bowl of raw food. I've had people report back to me that this one simple fix has boosted energy, eased chronic hayfever, resolved bloat and in one case, restored correct iron balance (by boosting assimilation). Try it for yourself!

LIMIT FLUIDS AROUND MEALTIME

Good digestion relies on powerful stomach acid to break down food and access nutrients. Fluids can dilute this acid, so leave a drink-free window of 30 minutes on either side of your meal to keep that digestion firing!



CHOOSE WHOLEFOODS FROM MOTHER NATURE

As often as possible, choose foods as close to nature and as minimally interfered with as possible. Whether it's vegies, meat, eggs, oils, rice, etc., choosing foods as close to their source as possible has the double benefit of maximising their vital energy (Qi) and limiting the amount of additives, preservatives and other non-food ingredients that are not building health.

SPLEEN-LOVIN' FOOD



- bland (see next page) “sweet” flavours, i.e. rice, potatoes
- root vegies to get grounded
- yellow-orange foods like pumpkin, lentil, corn, carrot
- cabbage, onion, fennel
- thick soups and stews
- millet, polenta, oats
- small amounts of sesame, peanuts, walnuts
- small amounts of honey
- warming spices like ginger, cinnamon, cloves, pepper, nutmeg, cardamom, vanilla, coriander, cumin, basil
- fermented foods, to fuel that digestive fire
- chicken, beef, bone broth
- small amount of healthy fats i.e. olive, coconut, avocado, butter, ghee



A NOTE ABOUT RICE

It's interesting to reflect that in contrast to our recent, modern obsession with brown rice, traditional cultures the world over choose to eat white rice. The vast majority of heavy metal pollutants (i.e. lead, arsenic) live in the outer husk, so removing it not only makes white rice easier to digest, but also helps to reduce toxic load. Win-win!!

GIVE SMOOTHIES, SALADS, FRUIT AND SWEETS A BIG MISS!



Here goes! This is usually the least popular of my tips, and look - if you're feeling great eating these foods, go for it!! But if you find yourself experiencing any of the Spleen-y symptoms listed earlier, isn't it worth giving this tweak a try? I have seen it yield profound changes for people. And once again, if we look to traditional cultures and what has stood the test of time, we don't tend to see these foods featuring in the vast quantities in which they are consumed today. From a CM lens, sweet-sugary foods are generally regarded as Yin (cooling, moistening) and not favourable for stoking that digestive fire, which likes to be kept warm and dry.

SWEET-BLAND vs. SWEET-SUGARY

In CM, we differentiate between sweet-bland foods, like rice and root vegies, which become sweeter the longer we chew them and break down the starchy bonds, and sweet-sugary foods like fruit, honey, sugar, desserts, soft drinks, which can disrupt blood sugar, hormone balance and digestion.



CREATE RITUAL AND A CALM SPACE AT MEALS

Each meal is an opportunity to connect with yourself and nourish body, mind and soul. **Slow down.** Take your time to arrive in your body, and enjoy a few slow, easeful breaths into your belly and ribs. Allow your abdomen to fill with air, and then allow any tension to leave on the exhale. Have you ever noticed how shallow your breathing can be when you are under pressure? Deep breathing is a signal to your body that it is safe to relax and to direct energy to functions such as digestion and repair.

Eat mindfully. Allow your senses to connect with your meal - how does it look? Smell? How does it make you feel? Take a moment of gratitude for all the hands (and mother nature) that made it possible. As we touched on earlier, the Spleen also governs mental digestion, so choose to eat away from distractions (i.e. work, TV, scrolling, intense conversations) to allow your body to focus on receiving completely the nourishment of your meal. Eating mindfully, without distractions, also allows you to take notice of how your body responds to different foods. Do you feel light and energised after certain foods? Or do some foods weigh you down or leave you tired?

Chew your food well. Digestion begins in the mouth: our saliva contains digestive enzymes that begin to break down food.



TRY RHYTHMIC MOVEMENT, JOURNALLING & MEDITATION

To support its processes, the Spleen enjoys repetition, rhythm and routine. Steady exercise like walking or swimming - linking breath with repetitive movement - soothes the Spleen and supports the digestion of life experiences.

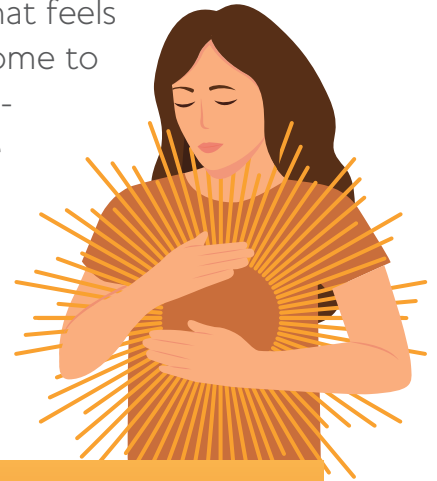
In a similar vein, journaling can be a great way to do a “brain dump” and close all of those open browser windows in our minds! Stream-of-consciousness writing, in which we write whatever comes to mind (with no worries about grammar, punctuation, or if it makes any sense!) is a good place to start. Just 10-20 minutes a day for a few days can create a lot of clarity in the mind.

Finally, meditation is a powerful way to deepen our relationship to ourselves. As in any relationship, the more regular, quality time we spend with our inner self, the better we get at listening to the messages from our body, mind and soul. While sitting for longer sessions of 10-20 minutes can be wonderful, consistency is the key: you can start with just 3 minutes every morning on waking, observing the breath, and add time as you feel more comfortable.



TUNE IN, GET CURIOUS & LISTEN TO YOURSELF

We are all unique, and what feels great for one individual may have the opposite effect on another. Ultimately, nobody knows you better than YOU, and the more that you get curious about what feels good and what doesn't, the more attuned you will become to hearing the whispers of your body-mind-soul. Our body-mind-souls are always sending us messages: these range from the very obvious (ice-cream headache, anyone?! there's the digestion protesting the cold again!) to the very subtle, like how our mood might feel lifted or energised after spending time with certain people (as opposed to others). Each message is an opportunity to understand ourselves a little more deeply.



SELF CHECK-IN QUESTIONS

- How do I feel after: eating / seeing / watching / doing?
- Close your eyes, take a few slow breaths: what would most nourish you right now?
- Set a reminder on your phone for three times during the day, and take 1 minute to stop, breathe and check-in with yourself: how are you? is there anything you need?



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Dr. Maz is a Doctor of Chinese Medicine, and uses the ancient wisdom of this medicine to understand what is showing up in the body, mind and soul. Her aim is to restore balance and resolve the root cause, using the gentle approaches of acupuncture, herbal medicine, food & lifestyle therapy and frequency medicine. In restoring balance, our vitality and health can freely blossom, and we can become our truest expressions of ourselves. Dr. Maz is passionate about empowering people with knowledge about health, and creating the space for people to remember that the power to heal already exists within each and every one of us.