

Classical Chinese Medicine

Developed over thousands of years through practiced medicine and observed outcomes, classical Chinese medicine is a science in its own right. Chinese medicine is a unique paradigm of understanding the human physical and emotional body. Classical Chinese medicine offers a distinctive and specialized lens through which the human body is observed, assessed, and treated. This ancient tradition—outlined in some of the world’s oldest clinical texts, including the *Huang Di Nei Jing*, or Zhang Zhongjing’s *Shanghan ZaBing Lun*—is a method of listening to and allowing the body to reflect nature’s processes and systems, grounded in Daoist natural philosophy: the macrocosmic outer world mirroring the microcosm of our inner landscape. It is an exploratory and observational method of understanding the complexity and multidimensionality of nature and the human body.

Classical Chinese medicine differs from conventional analytic scientism by seeing the body as an integral part of the external environment, under constant influence of the natural forces all around us, changing and shifting within space and time. The body or its components cannot be seen statically in isolation. With Chinese medicine, the influence of natural forces on the always-transforming human form is what we are trying to mediate. Therefore diagnosis, assessment, and treatment is fluid, dynamic, and individualized.

When we are born we have our inherited, genetically-based, constitutional strengths and weaknesses. We do not choose these traits; they are the inherent qualities that make us unique. However, the way we work with them as the years unfold will set the pattern of our body’s responses to the world. Ideally, we *cultivate* health.

From the Daoist perspective, life cultivation, called *yang shen*, is the first step: nourishing a state of optimal physical, mental, emotional and social health, not merely the absence of disease. Traditionally, life is cultivated by healthy eating, meditation, mindful exercise practices like Qi Gong and Tai Qi, and even through music, calligraphy, painting and writing poetry.

If we fail at this approach, we can then use medicine to help us regain what has slipped from the structure. Basing diagnoses on observational and sensory techniques passed down through ancient texts and a long lineage of teachers, such as pulse diagnosis and tongue examination, Classical Chinese Medicine uses modalities such as herbal medicine, acupuncture, cupping, moxa, tui na, scraping, food therapy, and compresses to meet the needs of the body in its desire for balance.

Symptoms of any kind— pain, improper digestive functions, circulatory issues, reproductive concerns, heart, lung liver or kidney disease, cancer etc... , or irregular emotions (described as an emotional that overtakes the mind and is not experienced such as, chronic and or crippling anxiety, prolonged bouts of depression or grief , uncontrollable anger, fear that is dysfunctional etc... , is an indication that the body is out of balance on a functional and or systemic level. However, with the right set of cues, the body may be reoriented towards its most harmonious way of functioning. Classical Chinese medicine is this functional medicine - working to improve system functions to increase vitality and the body's ability to regulate within environmental change, to sustain life stresses and trauma, and to balance body temperature, organ system functions, pain, and emotions.

The following are some of the keys ways our bodies' natural harmony can be disrupted:

- How we eat(improper diet) , drink (too much alcohol), play (extreme and exhausting exercise or indulgences), sleep(too much or not enough), and rest (too much inactivity), too much sex or thinking about sex all affect our physiology. Lifestyle habits inform our body and our physiological pathways respond, which impact functioning one way or another.
- Stresses, emotional trauma or shock are other big factors in how our body chemistry responds to the world. Modern science has confirmed what ancient Chinese thinking always knew: our emotions affect our chemistry. This can include mild day-to-day life stressors in work and relationships, to extreme stress or trauma, or even the secondary stress from dealing with . other health issues. Stress also comes in the form of 'stressing our body' in extremes. Over exercise or exertion and being exposed to extreme temperatures or noise etc...
- Long term alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking, or drug use—can leave the body deeply imbalanced. Eating disorders can play a role here too, including the long term effects of food restrictions and bingeing or purging. This is the regular consumption of something that has toxic impact on the body or extreme behaviors that exhaust and deplete multiple organ systems.
- Injuries and accidents also affect us. First, of course, they affect our body's structure, but ultimately, the outer layers (pain and or dysfunction of the physical body) end up affecting the inner workings of the body which affect how we work and live. Frequently, dramatic accidents or experiences leave a person with conditions like anxiety or PTSD.
- Some Western medical treatments, while saving lives, can have lasting effects on the body. Examples include cancer treatments (chemical or radiotherapy), IVF treatments and hormone therapies, various surgeries,

and day-to-day pharmaceutical medicines and their side effects such as NSAIDS and antibiotics.

- Finally, although sometimes taken less seriously, acquired illness such as common colds, flus, and communicable diseases can leave a lasting effect if not treated properly.

Of course, we are ALL exposed to, have experienced some of, indulge in, and happen to encounter many of the above mentioned factors. This is living, this is the full wonder and struggle of life.

We have available systems that support wholeness, well being, and with the goal to maintain and restore function. We can choose to find ways to rebuild our yang (function), protect our form (yin), and cultivate life. Classical Chinese Medicine is able to assess and deliberate on all of these above influences, to see how they impact function and form, and eventually help to restore the body to a state of balance and harmony.