



Staying Healthy with the Times and Seasons

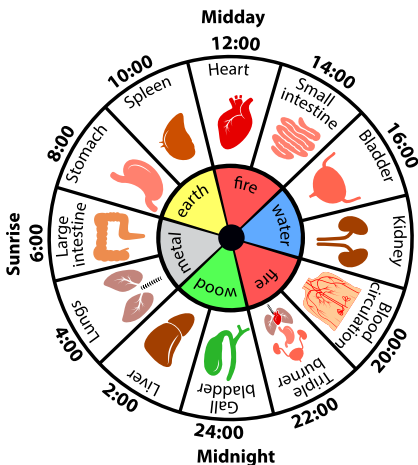
How When You Get Sick is Linked to Why You Get Sick

In the last issue of *Sunshine Sharing* we discussed the importance of balance in health. It is important to understand that balance in the body is not a static thing. It is dynamic. The body is constantly working to maintain balance in the ever-changing situations of life.

Because balance is dynamic, perhaps you've noticed that you feel better at certain times of the day than you do at others. For instance, maybe you may wake up feeling groggy and irritable, but start to feel better as the day progresses. Or, maybe you wake up feeling good, but suffer a mid-afternoon energy slump where you find it difficult to think clearly.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) recognizes that the various processes of the body are more or less active at different times of the day. Therefore, if a particular energy is either excessive or weak, it will cause the body to be more out of balance at certain times of the day. The same is true for the season of the year. People often feel better at some times of the year than they do at others.

So, part of keeping the body in balance is living in harmony with the cycles of nature. This is something few people in Western society give much thought to.



The TCM Meridian Clock

TCM practitioners developed a meridian clock, which shows the times of the day when the different organs and processes of the body are the most active. This meridian clock shows you how your system is out of balance so you can make lifestyle changes and use remedies to regain a healthy balance. Part of this is understanding different activities that are naturally suited for different times of the day.

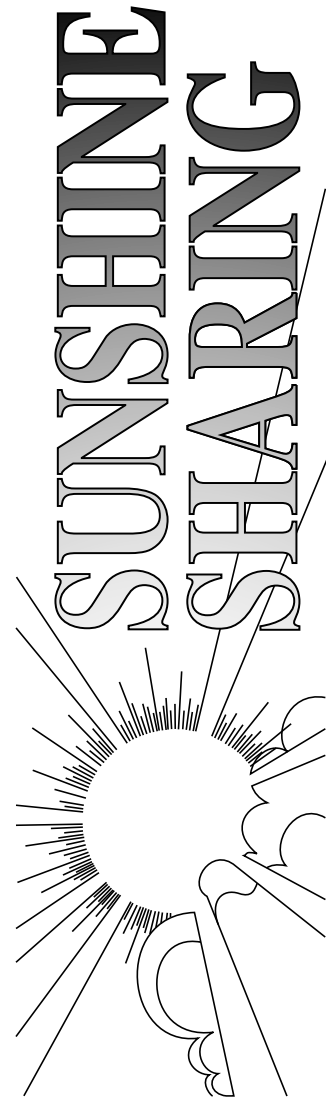
The meridian clock is pictured to the left. There are 12 principle meridians and each one is associated with one of the five elements and certain organs and processes. Each is most active during a window of about two hours each day. The time shown is the time when the energy is most active. It is least active at the opposite time of the day.

So, if the liver energy is excessive, one would probably experience the greatest signs of distress during the time the liver meridian is most active (1–3 AM). If the liver energy is deficient, however, the greatest symptoms would probably occur at the opposite time (1–3 PM) when the liver energy is at its lowest point. Thus, the meridian clock can help you assess which herbal formulas and lifestyle practices can help you return the body to balance.

The Annual Cycle

A similar pattern can be seen throughout the year. On the meridian clock midday would correspond to late June, the time of the summer solstice, when the day is the longest and the night the shortest. This would be the peak period for the heart energy, which may explain why weddings are most popular in the month of June. It's a low time for the gallbladder energy.

Midnight corresponds to the winter solstice when the nights are the longest and the days the shortest, which occurs at Christmas time in December. This would be the peak period for the gallbladder energy and the lowest point for the heart energy. It's also the time when cases of depression are highest, which corresponds to a lack of the happy, enthusiastic heart energy.



Your guide to better health the natural way.

Vol. 30 No. 9

Important Notice

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Sunrise would correlate to the spring equinox, which takes place in late March. Sunset correlates with the autumn equinox, which takes place in late September.

With this understanding, we're ready to look at the daily and yearly cycle of the five elements and their 12 principle meridians. We'll focus primarily on the daily cycle, but also note important features of the annual cycle. We'll begin with the morning, the time when you should be waking up, continue through the day and finish with the nighttime hours.

For each period, we'll talk about the dominant energy for that period and what it means in terms of the ideal activities for that time of the day (or year). We'll also explain symptoms associated with imbalances in the body that show up at those times. In addition, we'll mention herb formulas and supplements that can help restore balance.

The Earth Element

Between 7–11 AM is the time of the earth element, which relates to the stomach, spleen and pancreas, that is, the process of digestion and assimilation of nutrition. If your earth energy is in balance you'll wake up feeling refreshed and emotionally centered. You'll also feel good during these morning hours.

The earth element would also be strong in the spring during April and May, the time when the earth is waking up from its winter sleep. Feeling good during this time of the year would correspond to a healthy earth element.

The Stomach Meridian

From 7–9 AM is the time when the stomach meridian is the most active. Ideally, you should be waking up around 7–8 AM and having breakfast shortly thereafter. Breakfast gets its name from breaking the fast that was held while sleeping. Stomach acid is highest in the morning, which means it is easier to digest protein and absorb minerals (earth) first thing in the morning.

Many nutritionists have stressed that breakfast is the most important meal of the day because it sets the metabolism for the rest of the day. A breakfast that is low in carbohydrates and high in protein with a moderate amount of good fats will get your metabolism off to a good start.

This is exactly what a traditional breakfast of eggs with bacon or sausage is. If your stomach is healthy you can digest foods like these most easily at breakfast. If you don't want to eat much for breakfast, you should at least make a protein smoothie.

If the stomach energy is weak in the morning or the system is congested from eating the night before, you might not have an appetite and may skip breakfast entirely. Or you may start the day with coffee and carbohydrates. This will make it harder to keep your blood sugar balanced for the rest of the day.

If a person lacks appetite during this time, and they tend to be thin, pale and find it difficult to digest protein, they may need an **Earth Increasing Formula**. They may also find it helpful to take **Digestive Enzymes** with meals. Weakness of the stomach energy can also lead to feeling worried or nervous in the morning.

If one is groggy and feels sluggish in the morning in spite of a good night's sleep this is a sign of excess wood energy. Wood energy

suppresses earth energy. Wood energy resides in the liver and gallbladder. Drinking alcohol puts stress on the liver and the hangover that follows the next morning is an example of how a congested liver energy will create problems with the stomach energy.

In this case, a **Wood Decreasing Formula** will prove helpful. It's also a good idea to stop eating heavy meals in the evening so that the body can clean itself out during the night and be prepared to receive nourishment in the morning.

The Spleen Meridian

As we understand it in Western medicine, the Chinese spleen meridian relates more to the pancreatic functions. In TCM, the spleen transforms the food you eat into muscle or tissue. The pancreas aids digestion of nutrients and regulates blood sugar levels to maintain a stable energy for the day.

For healthy people, the hours from 9–11 AM should be a time of mental clarity and good energy, a time to get work done. If a person is sluggish and experiences brain fog during this time, their blood sugar is probably out of balance. Skipping breakfast could result in low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia, during this time.

Blood sugar levels are typically taken in the morning after fasting since the previous evening, a reading known as a fasting blood sugar. If blood sugar is high when a person has been fasting they have poor pancreatic function and/or are resistant to insulin. In the early stages, this is called metabolic syndrome and is linked to increased inflammation, risk of heart disease and to obesity. It can also lead to diabetes.

If morning blood sugar is high a person should take a **Blood Sugar Regulating** formula to help balance their blood sugar and avoid all simple carbohydrates and coffee for breakfast. If a person has a lot of gas and bloating and feels stuffy in the morning, an **Earth Decreasing Formula** may be helpful.

The Fire Element, Phase One

Between 11 AM–3 PM is the time of the fire element. The fire element is involved in energy, motivation and enthusiasm. This corresponds to what should be the most active and productive part of your day. It also corresponds to months of June and July, which should also be busy, active times.

The Heart Meridian

From 11 AM–1 PM is the time of the heart meridian. The heart is the seat of emotions and if the heart meridian is healthy, you should feel positive and energized at this time of the day. This is also typically the time during which people eat lunch. If breakfast was skipped and coffee was taken instead of breakfast, a person may feel excessively hungry or feel dry and thirsty at this time. It is best to wait to consume a bitter beverage like coffee until after 11 AM as bitters stimulate fire energy.

Excess energy in the heart meridian may result in emotional distress during these hours, such as anxiety or mania. A person might also experience chest pains, heart palpitations, dizziness or irritability. If you experience these emotions around midday to early afternoon, a **Fire Decreasing Formula** may be helpful.

In contrast, if you feel tired, sluggish and are lacking in energy, a **Fire Increasing Formula** should help. A person who needs to increase fire will often feel tired during this part of the day, but will



suffer from restless and disturbed sleep at the opposite time of the day, which is 11 PM–3 AM.

The Small Intestine Meridian

The small intestines are most active from 1–3 PM. They absorb nutrients from the food you consume, helping to sustain activity and energy during this time. During this time, they also begin the process of rejecting waste materials.

If there is afternoon sluggishness and a lack of energy, it may be because the small intestines aren't working very well due to dysbiosis or leaky gut. Other signs of imbalance would include stiffness in the neck and pain in the shoulders or arm. This is a low point for the liver meridian and fatigue during this time could indicate a wood deficiency and require a **Wood Increasing Formula**.

The hot summer months are also a good time for fasting or eating light meals of mostly fruits and vegetables. This also helps balance the body during the heat of the summer.

The Water Element

From 3–7 PM, the water element becomes active. This period of water energy is between two periods of fire energy. Since water brings down the fire element, it is a natural time for slowing down and corresponds to the time that many people get off work and want to take a little time to relax and unwind. It's also a good time for contemplation. As one gets older, it's also a nice time for a siesta or nap.

If a person experiences too much of an energy slump during this time, they may have an excess of water or a deficiency of fire. A **Water Reducing Formula** may be called for if one also experiences fluid retention, swollen lymph nodes or back pain.

This excess of water may also be a sign of deficient earth energy, since earth controls water in the TCM system. This is typically a blood sugar problem, where the sugar is too high early in the day (see the spleen meridian) and drops too low during this time. So, toning the spleen qi with an **Earth Increasing Formula** may also help. This would correspond to the period of late summer to early fall, August and September, which is harvest time.

The Bladder Meridian

From 3 PM–5 PM the bladder meridian activates to remove the waste produced from metabolism. This is a good time to drink some extra water to help flush these toxins from the body. It's also important to drink plenty of water in late summer.

The Kidney Meridian

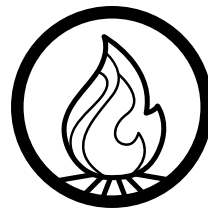
As one slows down in the evening, the time between 5 PM–7 PM is a good time for a relaxing dinner and pleasant conversation. It's also a good time to take a walk and stimulate your circulation.

During these two periods of the water element, it's important to stay well hydrated. If the body is having trouble removing liquid waste it can result in an over acid condition which creates stiffness in the neck and shoulders, headaches and back pain.

It can also create feelings of irritability that aren't able to be expressed, what is sometimes referred to as being pissed off. Urinary symptoms such as painful urination or difficult urination may also occur. Drinking more water and taking a **Water Increasing Formula** can help with these symptoms.

The Fire Element, Phase Two

The fire element becomes active again between 7 PM–11 PM. It's the time for the more playful, fun-loving aspect of fire energy, which is also associated with sexual desire. It corresponds to the period of October to November, which is the beginning of the holiday season, a time for fun and celebration. If you feel burned out or exhausted during this period, you may need a **Fire Increasing Formula**. On the other hand, if you feel restless and manic, try a **Fire Decreasing Formula**.



The Pericardium Meridian

In TCM, the Pericardium is the heart protector and the court jester who makes the king (the heart) laugh. It's interesting that the time this meridian is active is from 7–9 PM, a prime time for watching TV or otherwise desiring to be entertained. It's a time to refresh yourself and unwind from the day's activities.

This meridian has also been called the circulation/sex meridian because it governs sexual passion. That's why this is a good time for romance (an evening date) leading to sexual activity before bed.

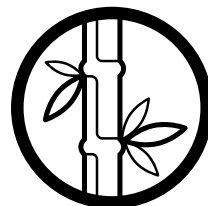
The Triple Heater

From 9–11 PM, the triple warmer reaches its peak activity. This meridian regulates food intake, metabolism and waste removal. It affects all the organs of the body and is associated with glandular functions, particularly the thyroid and adrenals.

This is the time you should be getting ready for bed and going to sleep. If you start to experience health problems before bedtime, the triple heater meridian, is probably disturbed. You may need a **Thyroid Glandular Formula** and/or an **Adrenal Glandular Formula** if you experience symptoms at this time.

The Wood Element

The meridians and organs associated with the wood element activate from about 11–3 AM. You should go to bed by 11 so you can be sleeping during this time. During sleep, the body begins the process of internal detoxification, which is largely controlled by the liver. In the cycle of the year, this is the middle of winter, December and January, when nature is sleeping.



The Gall Bladder Meridian

The gall bladder is the home of resentment and feelings of resentment may surface from 11 PM–1 AM in people who have unresolved anger issues. People who have an excess of wood energy (excessive anger and irritability) often start to feel wound up at this time and are unable to go to sleep.

Late night partying (and especially drinking) may be a way to try to avoid dealing with these feelings. This is not a time to be eating or drinking because it means the liver will have to be processing nutrients in the middle of the night instead of clearing out toxins and congestion. The result will be morning grogginess and a lack of appetite, as discussed under *The Earth Element*.

Not eating after 7 PM and taking a **Wood Decreasing Formula** to reduce the congestion in the liver may help a person feel less

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irritable and anxious and be able to sleep at this time. Specific symptoms associated with disharmony of the gall bladder meridian include headaches, a bitter taste in the mouth, pain in the chest, lower chest and buttocks.

The Liver Meridian

From 1–3 AM the liver meridian is active. The body should be going into deep stages of sleep. This is a time when the liver should start releasing IGF-1 in response to Growth Hormone from the pituitary, which initiates tissue healing and repair. The liver will be processing toxins for their elimination the next morning.

Waking up at this time (or still being unable to sleep at this time) indicates disharmony in the liver meridian. This may be due to anger or depression on an emotional level, or a system that is overly burdened with food and toxins. Again, a *Wood Decreasing Formula* may be helpful.



The Metal Element

During the coldest and darkest part of the night from 3–7 AM the metal element is most active. This is the energy that defends the body against infection and toxins. It also corresponds to late winter and early spring, a time known as the cold and flu season.

Being able to sleep soundly through this part of the night is a sign of a healthy immune system and a sense of inner peace and dignity. Unresolved grief or shock, as well as dogmatic or rigid states of mind can result in a person waking up during this time of night and finding it impossible to go back to sleep. They will lie awake thinking about their problems and their mind will not shut down and allow them to return to sleep.

The Lung Meridian

From 3–5 AM, the lung meridian is most active. If the metal energy is disordered a person may experience sinus congestion, snoring, sleep apnea or difficulty breathing during this period of time. According to TCM philosophy, the lung regulates qi through all the

systems of the body. The movement of breathing helps move the fluids of the body. Breathing pumps the lymphatic system when you are not physically active, which is why being able to breathe deeply while sleeping is important.

If the metal energy is congested and you wake up with respiratory problems, you may need a *Metal Decreasing Formula* to help clear the congestion. If you wake up during this time and are suffering from obsessive thoughts, you should practice breathing slowly and deeply to help regulate your emotional balance.

The cold, dry air of winter often leads to respiratory problems. Taking a *Metal Increasing Formula* can help ward off this winter-time illness. This will also be helpful if one has a dry, hacking cough.

Fire tempers metal, so if you're tired during the day, but wake up during these hours of the night, a *Fire Increasing Formula* may be helpful. This formula helps preserve the body's moisture, which can help keep your lungs and sinuses from drying out during the night and help you to sleep without waking frequently to urinate.

The Large Intestine or Colon Meridian

The large intestine meridian is active shortly before waking up. This is why most healthy people have a morning bowel elimination when they first wake up. If this isn't happening it may be helpful to increase the intake of dietary fiber and water to help insure healthy bowel functions. If this isn't enough, taking cascara sagrada or a *Stimulant Laxative Formula* prior to bedtime will help ensure a proper morning elimination and ready the stomach for breakfast.

Now that you understand the natural cycle of the body, consider how you can live in greater harmony with the daily and yearly cycle of life. It will lead you to greater health and wellbeing.

Additional Help and Information

For more information about using TCM to stay healthy with the times of day and the seasons of the year, contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

<https://foreverconscious.com/traditional-chinese-organ-body-clock>

<http://independentspirituality.com/daily-meridian-clock/>

<https://www.organicolivia.com/2014/10/tcm-body-clock-why-do-we-wake-up-or-feel-ill-at-a-certain-time-of-day/>