

Spleen/Stomach or Earth Element

Duties:

- Provides the grounding and stability needed for proper function of the mind and body.
- Rules the transformation (digestion) and transportation (assimilation) of nourishment, information, and experience.
- Focuses the mind and is responsible for powers of concentration, memory, purpose, intention, and the ability to set and achieve goals.

Characteristics of Healthy Earth:

- Easily assimilates nourishment from a variety of sources (food, relationships, creativity, education, etc.)
- Expresses healthy concern and sympathy for others.
- Able to incorporate and use new information and ideas.
- Tolerant and compassionate. Enjoys diverse relationships with all kinds of people.
- Able to set goals and achieve them without distraction.
- Emotionally stable. Able to make and keep commitments.
- Digestive fire is adequate to "rot and ripen" food and set the stage for digestion and assimilation.
- The flesh of the body is rounded and firm.
- The movement of blood is controlled as it moves through the proper channels.

Symptoms of Earth Imbalance:

Physical

- Poor digestion with symptoms such as ulcers, heartburn, hyperacidity, belching, gas, abdominal bloating, diarrhea, sluggishness and lethargy after meals.
- Difficulty thinking clearly. Feeling heavy-headed, trouble understanding and remembering, slow-witted. "Muddy."
- Clumsy feeling in the body. Limbs or joints feel heavy and difficult to move.
- Inflammation of the gums, lips, tongue or anus (hemorrhoids).
- Bleeds or bruises easily. Chronic problems such as varicose veins, rosacea, nose bleeds, excessive menstrual bleeding and other types of hemorrhaging.
- Headaches with pain around the eyes and forehead, or worse from humid or damp weather.
- Blood sugar imbalances: all types of diabetes, hypoglycemia.
- Loose stools, mucus or undigested food in the stools.
- Hypothyroidism. Sluggish metabolism.
- Excessive mucus anywhere in the body.
- Too much or too little saliva.
- Poor muscle tone and wasting flesh.
- Anemia.
- Arthritic and rheumatic pain.
- Excessive or deficient appetite.
- Craving for sweets and carbohydrates.
- Prone to internal damp heat imbalances.
- Lethargy. Lack of stamina or endurance.

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Emotional

- Obsessive worry and fears of deprivation.
- Muddled or confused thinking. Rumination. Goes over and over the same ground.
- Unable to absorb new information. Easily overwhelmed.
- Difficulty adapting to and accepting changes. "Stuck in the mud."
- Sluggish with little or no energy. Everything seems to require immense effort.
- Overly concerned with the feelings, needs and problems of others, or self-absorbed and unable to show concern for others.
- Inappropriate need for approval, attention and affection.
- Fear of abandonment. Unable to be alone.

Therapeutic Strategies for Balancing Earth

- Increase digestive qi with carminative herbs, digestive bitters and demulcents.
- Use nervines and adaptogenic herbs to restore the nervous system.
- Support the Kidney Yang with adaptogenic herbs and Kidney tonics.
- Assess the diet to increase warming foods, reduce or eliminate processed food, dairy products, cold foods and drinks.
- Establish rituals for the act of eating. Eliminate all distractions such as driving cars, television, reading, upsetting conversations. Offer prayers of gratitude. Allow at least 30 minutes per meal for the sensual appreciation of the nourishment being received. Slow food.
- Emphasize a seasonal whole foods diet, organic whenever possible. Consider growing some of the things you like to eat. Avoid out of season foods.
- Address any emotions that may be negatively affecting food choices and eating habits.
- Allow enough time for thinking, reading, contemplation and discussion. Monitor your information intake to avoid stuffing yourself with new ideas, information, or experiences.

Earth Facts

- The Qi of the Spleen/Stomach peaks between 7:00 AM and 11:00 AM. During this time, one should be taking in a significant amount of nourishment in the form of breakfast. This is also a good time to take in all sorts of information that you will then "digest and assimilate" throughout the day.
- The Sound associated with Earth is singing. Song is used by many religions as a vehicle for expressing faith and joy, and as a way of building community. The simple act of singing dispels fear and doubt.
- Earth is damaged by excessive dampness produced by processed, cold or mucus producing foods, and humid, damp climates.
- Earth needs the warmth and inspiration of Fire to give it direction and purpose.
- Earth provides the nourishment and structure needed by Water to maintain adequate reserves and proper flow.
- The spleen and stomach work with the liver and gall bladder (Wood) for efficient digestion.
- Earth provides the stability need to maintain the proper cadence for respiration and elimination and the nutrients needed for creation of Blood and Qi.