

Lung/Large Intestine or Metal Element

Duties:

- Responsible for making judgements about what is beneficial or harmful, right or wrong, and good or bad (physically and emotionally).
- Maintains healthy boundaries and creates distinctions between self and other.
- Creates Qi and Blood from essences derived from Grain Qi (food) and Air Qi (oxygen).
- Establishes the essential cadence of Qi as it moves through the body.

Characteristics of Healthy Metal:

- Healthy ability to forgive and forget. Willing to live in the present and not be burdened by the past. Able to let go of what is no longer needed.
- Judgement is excellent and the powers of discrimination are refined.
- Appreciation and dedication to truth, justice, ethics and beauty.
- Admires and values intellectual achievement.
- Surface immune response is efficient and effective.
- Respiration is strong.
- Oxygen and nutrient quality of Blood and blood is adequate.
- Moisture and fluids are circulated throughout the body.
- Skin is moist and supple.
- Elimination occurs without effort.
- The spine is flexible and movement is fluid.

Symptoms of Metal Imbalance:

Physical

- Respiratory problems such as shortness of breath, breathing difficulties, asthma, emphysema, recurring respiratory infections, chronic dry cough, seasonal allergies, rhinitis, and sinus infections.
- Excessive mucus discharges resulting in congestion of the lungs, nose, or sinuses
- Stiff posture with jerky movements, inflexibility of the spine, calcification in the spinal column, and excessive tightness in the chest, diaphragm, and shoulders.
- Chronic bowel problems such as diarrhea, constipation, spastic colon, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, colitis, Crohn's disease, etc.
- Headaches caused by poor elimination.
- Impaired immune response resulting in frequent infections.
- Chronic dryness of the skin or mucus membranes.
- Sensitive skin: eczema, psoriasis, or dermatitis.
- Overly sensitive to temperature changes.
- Excessive or deficient perspiration.

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Emotional:

- Overly critical and judgmental of self and others. Unable to forgive and forget. Holds grudges.
- Fear of losing control. Uncomfortable with spontaneity.
- Excessive need for order, discipline, cleanliness or purity.
- Frequently engages in ritualized behavior.
- Suffers from unresolved grief.
- Emotionally cold and distant.
- Obsessed with possessing and accumulating material possessions.
- Low self esteem. Relies on outside authority figures (government, work, religion, relationships, etc.) to provide structure and discipline.
- Phobic. Especially fearful of new people, unfamiliar or unpredictable situations.
- Inhibited. Lack of creativity and adaptability. Anxious.

Therapeutic Strategies for Balancing Metal:

- Immune and lung tonics to support and improve immune system, reduce allergic reactions and support the respiratory system.
- Adaptogenic and nervine herbs to relax tendencies to be constricted and contracted.
- Kidney Yin and Yang tonics as needed to support deep immune function, supplement fluids and moisture, increase overall ability to adapt.
- Laxative, hepatic and alterative herbs as needed to improve elimination and aid detoxification.
- Regular aerobic exercise to improve lung and heart function, and stimulate circulation. Also, consider yoga and other practices that emphasize working with the breath, stretching and relaxing the spine.
- Get regular massage to circulate Qi, improve lymphatic drainage, reduce stress, relax muscle tension and increase body awareness.
- Use therapy, ceremony, or other methods for dealing with unresolved grief.
- Assess diet to reduce mucus producing or overly drying foods. Increase pungent or spicy foods if excessive congestion is a problem. Add immune strengthening foods such as shiitake mushrooms to the diet.
- Explore the use of essential oils to support the lungs, help express constrained emotions and strengthen immune function.

Metal Facts

- The Qi of the Lung and Large Intestine peaks between 3:00 AM and 7:00 AM. During this time one transitions from a period of sleep and actively moves into a new day. This is an excellent time to do any practice that involves the breath such as meditation, yoga, etc. and spiritual practices such as chanting or prayer. During this time the first bowel movement of the day should occur.
- The Sound associated with Metal is weeping. Many lung and large intestine imbalances are the result of unresolved grief
- Metal provides the Qi and Blood needed to create reserves and maintain immune function. (Water)
- The inspiration and passion of Fire keeps Metal from becoming too rigid and cold.
- Earth nourishes Metal by providing the nutrients needed to create Blood and Qi.
- Metal provides discipline and order to counter the overly expansive tendencies of Wood.