

Liver/Gall Bladder or Wood Element

Duties:

- Maintain the dynamic equilibrium needed to respond appropriately to change and opportunity.
- Hold and release substances and emotions at the proper time.
- Monitor and facilitate the flow of Qi and Blood.
- Provide grace and flexibility to the body and mind.

Characteristics of Healthy Wood:

- Well developed ability to see things as they really are and make sound decisions.
- Responds appropriately to emotional, physical and spiritual challenges.
- Actions are strong, sure and appropriate.
- Comfortable taking responsibility and acting in a leadership role.
- Able to adapt to the difficulties of everyday life with grace and humor.
- Thorough elimination of toxins and waste.
- Smooth circulation of blood and other fluids keeps all organs functioning properly.
- Muscles, ligaments, and tendons are well lubricated, flexible and strong
- Rhythmic reproductive system function (women) and hormonal balance.

Symptoms of Wood Imbalance:

Physical

- Problems with muscles, ligaments and tendons. Chronic muscle tension, especially in the neck and shoulders. Muscle spasms, ticks and cramps. Frequent injuries. Sciatica. Seizures. Strokes.
- Headaches. Cyclical or allergy-induced migraine headaches. Headaches with symptoms of extreme muscle tension (neck and shoulders), shooting pains on the side of the head, visual disturbances, sensitivity to light, nausea and vomiting, and intense feeling of pressure.
- Menstrual problems. Irregular or painful menses. Severe pre-menstrual tension, delayed menses, strong cramps, heavy menstrual flow with stagnant blood (clots), bloating, breast pain or tenderness, headaches, and insomnia.
- Sleep disturbances. Insomnia, especially problematic between 11:00 PM and 3:00 AM. Poor sleep. Restlessness. Muscle cramps and spasms that disturb sleep.
- Allergies made worse by certain foods, seasons, weather or exposure to chemicals.
- Chronic sinusitis with frequent infections. Usually worse in spring.
- Eye problems: blurry vision, eye pain, floaters.
- Chronic skin problems such as acne, boils, psoriasis, eczema, rashes and dandruff.
- Tendency to form cysts, masses, fibroids, benign and malignant tumors.
- Cancer. Especially of the liver and breast.
- Liver disease: jaundice, hepatitis (A, B & C), cirrhosis, enlarged, irregular enzymes
- Digestive problems: gastric reflux, hyperacidity, gas, bloating, belching, indigestion, ulcers, spastic colon, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, chronic diarrhea or constipation
- High blood pressure. Unpredictable fluctuations in BP.
- Sharp, stabbing or wandering pain.
- Ridged, brittle or weak nails.

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Emotional

- Nervous tension, irritability and restlessness.
- Depression fueled by unexpressed anger.
- Volatile temper. Aggressive or violent behavior.
- Feels powerless, victimized and unappreciated.
- Over controlling.
- Inflexible or rigid thinking. Unable to cope with change.
- Fear of constriction or imposed limitations.
- Goal oriented to a fault. Tendency to over extend and over work.
- Addictive tendencies.

Therapeutic Strategies for Balancing Wood

- Hepatics to support liver function and detoxification.
- Nervine relaxants as needed to reduce muscle tension, improve sleep quality and improve the circulation of Qi.
- Adaptogens and Kidney tonics (after Excess has been resolved.)
- Lung tonics (may also be Kidney tonics.)
- Daily exercise is essential to maintain flexibility, free movement of Blood and Qi, and elimination of toxins. Stretching and deep breathing should be emphasized.
- Adjust sleep patterns in order to be sleeping between 10:00 PM and 3:00 AM.
- Assess diet to emphasize foods that improve liver function and reduce exposure to chemicals, exogenous hormones, etc. Eliminate or reduce intake of alcohol, pharmaceuticals, artificial sweeteners, preservatives, commercially raised meat and dairy products. Increase hepato-protective foods such as leafy greens, beets, medicinal mushrooms, vegetables and fruits (organic).
- Avoid exposure to environmental toxins.
- Therapy as needed to learn healthy techniques for expressing emotions.

Wood Facts

- The Qi of the Liver and Gall Bladder peaks between 11:00 PM and 3:00 AM. During this time, one should be asleep to allow the Qi of the liver to attend to the proper elimination of toxins from the blood and the regulation of hormone levels.
- The Sound associated with Wood is shouting. An inappropriately loud voice or tendency to shout can indicate problems with Wood.
- Many Wood symptoms are worse with exposure to wind.
- Harmonious emotions and digestion are the result of healthy Wood Qi.
- Wood needs the grounding provided by appropriate rest, stillness and sufficient fluids. (Water)
- Wood makes possible the free expression of creativity through the personality. (Fire)
- Wood is responsible for regulating digestion. (Earth).
- Regulation of the Qi of Wood is the result of the rhythm of the breath and regular elimination. (Metal)