



August/Sept 2014

# Shiatsu Late Summer Newsletter

Alan Bishop and Frances Rayner

Welcome to the fourth edition of our Shiatsu Newsletter.

## Earth Element

The Earth element relates to how people look after themselves and how they care for others. Earth energy allows our caring to empower ourselves and those we care for, rather than fostering dependence.

### Element Season:

#### *Late summer*

Earth is the element of center and balance, where the earth energy starts to transform into a downward movement; it is associated with late or Indian summer and also with the last few days of each season, when the Ki of the season starts to change into the next.

### Element Associations:

#### *Stability, support, fertility, receptivity, nourishment*

Earth element relates to nourishment, centeredness, and transformation. Stomach takes in food, and Spleen transforms the purest part of the food into Ki. A healthy Spleen and Stomach are the foundation therefore, not only of a good digestion but also of abundant physical energy. Earth is associated with the mouth, through which a person nourishes the body, and the fleshy parts of the muscles. Earth is the season of change, the transitions between each of the seasons, and is related to stability through transitions in a person's life.

***"We are part of the earth, and it is part of us...we love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat."***

(Chief Seattle, from a speech, 1812).



A healthy Earth element in the human character gives the capacity to support, comfort and nourish others in the same way and we call someone who manifests this characteristic strongly an earth mother. Our relationship with the person who represents mother for us powerfully affects the Earth meridians within us (Stomach and Spleen).

The earth is "fertile", a matrix from which come the plants which nourish us, the streams from which we drink, the minerals and metals which enrich our lives. This ability of the soil to contain and encourage abundance and variety within itself is the capacity of the Earth element.

***"Earth permits sowing, growing and reaping"***

(from the Shang Shu, quoted in The Foundations of Chinese Medicine).

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The time of day when the Stomach meridian has its energy peak is from 7am – 9am, while the time of the Spleen is from 9am – 11am. This implies that our digestive capacity is greatest in the morning, although most people with an imbalance in Earth will find it hard to muster an appetite until after mid-morning.

### **Good Food**

Good food is full of energy and is enjoyable. Fresh organic food contains more nutrients than junk food which is full of additives and preservatives. Brown rice has a life force which means it can sprout.



### **Unhealthy Foods for Earth people:**

- Refined sugars.
- Dairy products, particularly cheese - these are mucus producing foods.
- Yeast.
- Raw food when the weather is cold.



## Someone with harmonious Earth energy:

- Is grounded – a practical person who is not easily knocked off balance.
- Has a healthy appetite and a good relationship with food.
- Has good muscle tone with no sagging.
- Enjoys moderate exercise.
- Enjoys intellectual stimulation, such as studying, reading, and solving problems.
- Has a place which she calls her own.
- Has a good relationship with her mother.



## Symptoms of Earth element Imbalance:

Physical manifestations of an Earth imbalance may include any sort of digestive disorder such as acid reflux, bloating, or loose stools. A person may have a loss of appetite or pain in the abdomen. If Spleen is not transforming the food into Ki, fatigue will result, and women may have symptoms such as scanty menstruation or dizziness. Female reproductive hormones are connected with the Earth element, and issues with fertility are considered an Earth imbalance. When Earth is out of balance, flesh may be achy and the person may not want to exercise.

## How does Earth energy get out of balance?

### Bad habits with food

Irregular eating weakens the Earth. Regular meals – especially breakfast – help. Eating on the run, or whilst reading, upsets digestion.

### Support

If a person has difficulty accepting nourishment in the form of emotional support from others, the Earth element is involved. Eating disorders are often related to the inability to accept nourishment on other levels.



### Lack of exercise

When the muscles lose tone, the body begins to sag internally and externally. Exercise such as walking, gardening and dancing all benefit the connective tissue.

### Worry

Worry ties the brain in knots and tangles Earth energy. Shiatsu calms troubled thoughts.

### Caring

Earth energy is easily upset if the balance between caring for others and oneself is out of adjustment. This is a problem in many professions, such as nursing and social work.



### Insecurity

Moving house, travelling, and staying in others' houses all disturb the Earth energy.

### Self-care for Earth:

- Get regular exercise.
- Do something nice for yourself.
- Cook a healthy meal and enjoy each bite.
- Sing.
- Avoid sweet foods and cold or frozen foods.