



# Organs and Their Functions

## ***Heart***

The heart is about the size of a human's fist. It is located on the left side behind your chest bone. The heart circulates blood throughout the body.

In Chinese theory, the Heart is literally the Emperor and Sovereign of the body. The Heart has a double role, as did the Chinese sovereign. In traditional Chinese society, the Emperor was the personification of Heaven on Earth. He brought prosperity and order to his kingdom simply by his existence. He radiated his enlightenment, intelligence and personal harmony from his palace.

The Heart is also an organ which has authority by nature, whose presence alone is a guarantee of order, like the emperor. The heart has command over the body, just as the emperor has command over the kingdom. This command is achieved through the radiance the heart displays, not by action. The heart presides over the body, just as the sovereign is the head of the kingdom.

The heart also houses the shen, the spiritual life force or the purified chi. The shen is beyond Yin and Yang, is indestructible, and is linked to the whole, or as the Taoists describe, the void, nothingness. It is out of this nothingness that existence sprang. The Heart produces Fire Chi.

## ***Spleen***

The spleen is located under the left rib cage, beneath the stomach. The spleen is the largest mass of lymphatic tissue and the largest lymph node in the body. It filters, stores and cleans the blood. It breaks down and eliminates bacteria and worn out blood cells and recycles them into bile which is passed to the liver. Besides cleaning the blood, it also stores blood (about 1 ½ pints) for emergencies. It also plays a central role in the body's immune system. It produces B cells, which develop into antibody-producing plasma cells. When

massaged, it releases extra blood into the system and bolsters the immune function.

In the Chinese system, the spleen and pancreas are associated with YIN EARTH organs. Their digestive functions, associated with the digestive function of the liver and gall bladder, are in charge of “transformation and transportation.” The spleen extracts Chi from food, mixes it with Chi from the lungs, distributes it according to the five tastes, and assigns it to its proper element and organ. If its function is blocked or inefficient, the blood and Chi in the whole body can be upset.

The spleen is also in charge of transporting Chi to the muscles and limbs. The muscles are the Earth tissues and any muscular problems can be treated by working on the functions of the Earth element in the body. In acupuncture, all muscular disorders are generally treated by working on the spleen, pancreas and stomach channel, or any other Earth parts of the other channels.

## ***Stomach***

The stomach is “J” shaped. It is located just on the centerline and extends to the left of it just below the sternum.

The stomach receives food from the esophagus, stores it, and then empties the food into the duodenum, the beginning section of the small intestine. It secretes enzymes and juices that help break down proteins and turn them into thin liquid called *chyme*. This fluid is then passed on to the small intestine, where any nutrients are absorbed.

In Chinese theory, the stomach is called the *Sea of Nourishment* or the *Sea of Food and Fluid*, and the process of producing energy and blood begins here. It controls the Earth Chi. The spleen begins assigning some of the Chi from food while it is still in the stomach. This Chi is sent to the lungs where it combines with Chi taken from the air and turns it into blood and nutritious Chi.

## ***Pancreas***

The pancreas is located behind the stomach with its head near the centerline and its tail under the left side of the rib cage near the splenic bend of the large intestine. It is between 4.8 and 6 inches long.

The function of the pancreas is to manufacture pancreatic juice, which aids digestion when fed into the small intestine. Its juice is very alkaline and combined with the bile of the gall bladder, it helps to balance acidic juices from the stomach. This is the digestive function of the pancreas.

The pancreas also has an endocrine function, which is to release insulin into the blood to allow the sugar contents of the blood to be absorbed into the body’s

cells. When sugar is not absorbed, the condition is called diabetes, caused by lack of insulin.

Because everyone eats too much sugar, the pancreas overworks and quickly becomes too much insulin. This gets dumped into the blood causing hypoglycemia. The only remedy is to remain free from sugar.

The pancreas also releases cells which function is to kill off cells that were rebuilding a part of the body due to sickness or a physical cut of some sort. If these rebuilding cells are not killed once their job is finished, they will continue their manufacturing role, which eventually becomes detrimental tumors and cancers.

## ***Lungs***

The lungs are paired, cone-shaped organs located in the thoracic cavity. They are separated by the heart and by the plural membrane that encloses each lung. They are also separated from the abdominal cavity by the diaphragm.

The lungs mix blood with oxygen, and expel used air, carbon dioxide, and other toxins.

In the Chinese system, the lungs are the Metal Yin organ. They have a variety of functions, the first of which is to produce Metal Chi. The lungs rule and govern this Chi and respiration down to the cellular level. It is in the cells of the lungs that Chi in the body meets up with Chi in the air. The lungs also control skin and sweat.

## ***Kidneys***

The kidneys, like the spinal chord and brain, are well protected. They are located above the waist in the back. They are surrounded by the ribs which protect them. They are the size and shape of the average ear.

The kidneys filter all the fluids, removing excess water and unneeded by-products of the body's many chemical reactions. They can only move about 6 cups of liquid per day, including liquids that are already in the body, as well as what you drink. The kidneys regulate the mineral level in the blood and the acid balance in the body. If the body moisture is too low, kidney stones may develop.

The kidneys eliminate toxins after they have been broken down and released from the liver. If the kidneys get overloaded with toxins, they will slow down. Loss of energy in the kidneys will cause energy loss in the rest of the body.

The kidneys can accumulate many mineral deposits which can weaken their ability to function. If they can't function properly, then there will be too much fluid in the body leading to high blood pressure. Tonifying the kidneys is part of the process of lowering the blood pressure.

To the Chinese, the kidneys are the Yin Water organs. They store prenatal, reproductive energy and distribute this crucial energy, as needed, to all parts of the body. The kidneys are sometimes called the *roots of life*. They are very important in determining the level of vitality and length of life. All sexual energy comes from the kidneys. Any sexual or reproductive dysfunction can be traced to the kidneys. Often, they control pain in the lower back. The kidneys also control the skeletal system, bones and teeth. They produce Water Chi.

## **Liver**

The liver is located under the right side of the rib cage, underneath the right lung and diaphragm. It passes the centerline and extends to the left side.

The liver stores large quantities of blood, minerals and vitamins. It prepares carbohydrates for storage in the body by breaking them down into more simple sugars. It is in charge of protein and amino acid production. It produces fats, antibodies, and most plasma proteins. It also produces bile salts which are distributed by the gall bladder into the small intestine to absorb fats from the food consumed.

The liver stores all the toxins, poisons, chemicals and drugs that the body takes in. Its function is to break down poisons chemically into less toxic compounds so that they can be more easily eliminated by the rest of the body. These toxins usually stay in the liver for a long time before they have a chance to be processed.

According to Chinese medicine, the liver is the Yin Wood organ. The liver produces Wood Chi. The liver is responsible for the smooth functioning of the body. Any imbalance in the liver can greatly affect all the body's systems. It is also in control of the nerves, and therefore plays a role in the thinking process and nervous activity.

The liver is also where the Hun, the spiritual souls live. They are very skittish, timorous and gun-shy. They absolutely, positively do not like anger or poisonous toxins like alcohol or drugs. When these substances are present, they often flee from the body. This can be disastrous. The only way to convince them to return is to perform many good deeds, as well as acts of compassion towards others. The Hun love this behavior and will remain with you if you behave well and are lucky.

## **Gall Bladder**

The gall bladder is a pear shaped sack located in a depression under the liver. It is on the line near the bottom of the liver. For men, imagine a line from the right nipple to the navel. For women, imagine a line from the right shoulder to the navel. Where the line hits the bottom of the rib cage is where the gall bladder is located.

The function of the gall bladder is to store and concentrate bile until it is needed in the small intestine for digestion. The bile breaks down fat in foods.

In the Chinese system, the gall bladder is the Yang Wood organ and is related to decision making. When it is not working well, it can easily cause headaches, sluggishness, and indecision. It controls Wood Chi.

All data from this was provided verbatim from the book *CHI NEI TSANG INTERNAL ORGANS CHI MASSAGE* by Mantak Chia and Maneewan Chia, Revised Edition, Healing Tao Books, 1990 except for all information on the heart.

Some information about the heart taken from the following: *Psychospiritual Aspects of Traditional Chinese Medicine*

Notes for a talk given by the British acupuncturist and herbalist at East West Seminar at Bore Farm, July, 1997 **Francesca Diebschlag, BAc Bphil, MBAcC Mrchm** at the following website:

[http://www.planetherbs.com/articles/psych\\_tcm.html](http://www.planetherbs.com/articles/psych_tcm.html))

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