

# Chinese Medicine: Why the Spleen governs Digestion



*By Ciarán Handley*

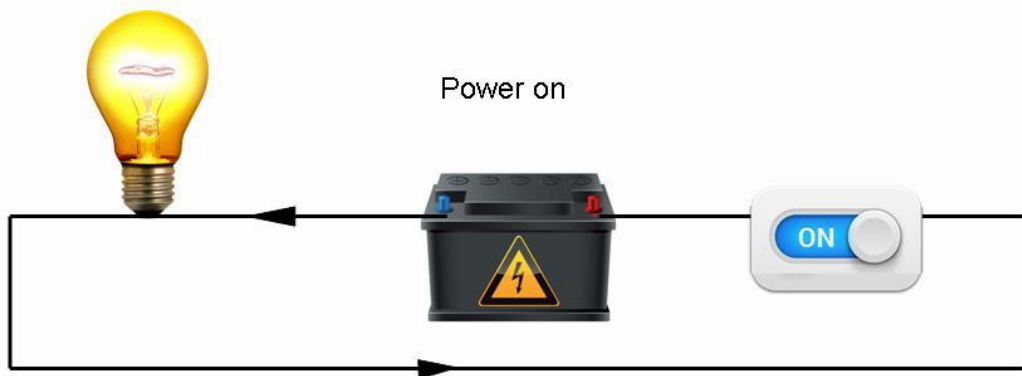
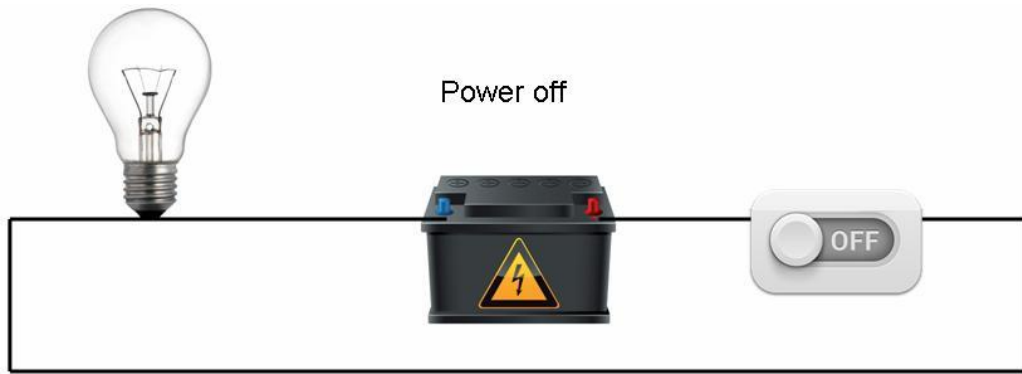
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# Chinese Medicine

## Chapter 1



*Why the Spleen governs digestion*



*To make the light bulb light up we need not only a light bulb but also a **power source***

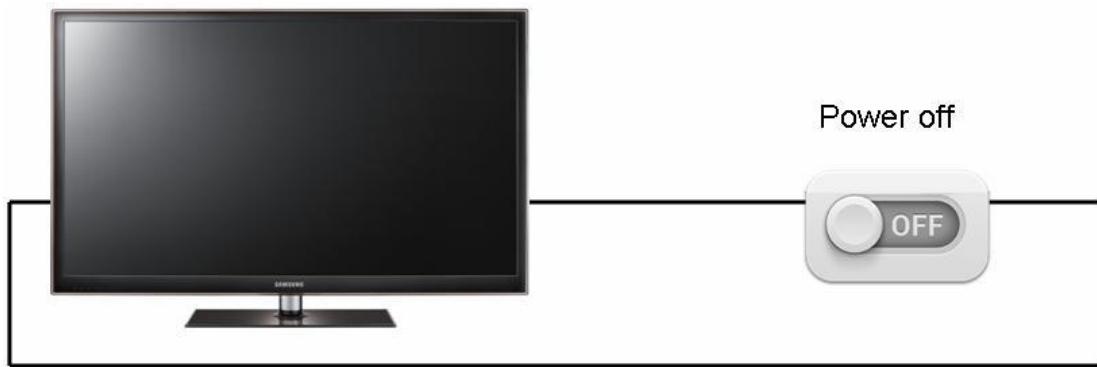
We've briefly introduced the concept of chi as a carrier of information. Now let us step back and look at chi as a *carrier of power*.

And to look at this we will introduce the analogy of electricity as a source of power.

Let us take the most basic example. A light bulb. You see it is not enough to have a light bulb. That by itself will not light up. It only lights up *if you have a power source*. So to understand the light bulb we must also understand that the light bulb only works if it has power.

With me so far?

Ok, let's move on.



*The television doesn't work unless it is powered on.  
So we need both the TV and a power source.*

It does not matter how wonderful a high-definition television you have. If you have no electricity, your television will not work.

So to have your television work correctly, make sure you have a functioning power supply.

Great. We're doing well. Let's keep going.



*The performance of a battery powered tool depends on the charge of the battery*

In the case of a television it either works or it doesn't. The power is either "on" or it is "off". So now let us consider an example which is not so black and white. Let us look at shades of grey.

Let us imagine a cordless power tool such as a battery powered drill. The performance of the tool depends on the charge of the battery.

If the battery is fully charged then the drill provides a lot of torque. In other words its performance is high. If the battery is running low then the drill provides less torque. In other words less power for drilling. And when the battery is flat the tool simply does not work.

*It does not matter* if I have the best "state of the art" power tool. It simply does not matter. If the battery is flat the tool *will not work*. Regardless of how wonderful the tool might be.

*The performance of the power tool cannot be considered independently of its power source*



*If the electricity supply fails then every appliance connected to that supply also fails*

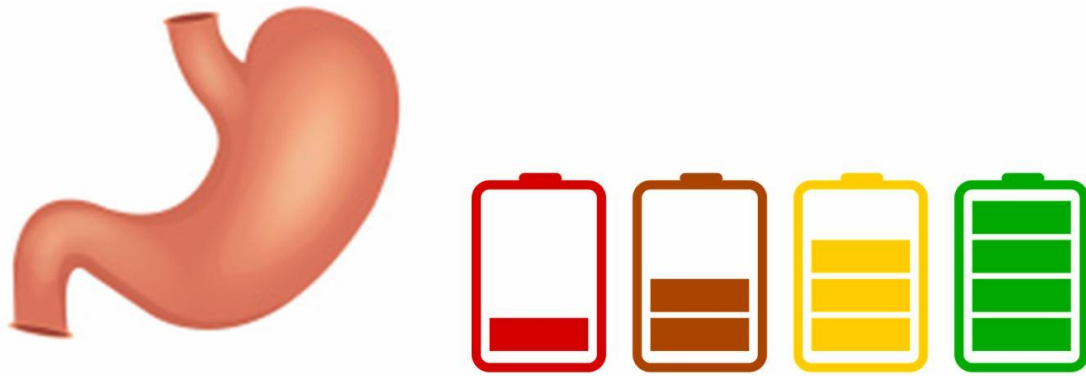
Kettles, washing machines, cookers and fridges, it doesn't matter. If the power fails then every appliance that requires that power will stop working.

That's the principle.

*That the appliances cannot be considered separately to their power supply*

That's the principle for electricity. And I think we've got that.

So let us now move on to chi. For the principle is *exactly the same*.



*The proper functioning of the **stomach** depends on the flow of power, or **chi**, to it*

Now we are going to consider the role of chi in powering the organs of digestion. The principle is exactly the same as that of electricity powering appliances. Exactly the same.

The proper functioning of the stomach cannot be considered independently of the flow of power to the stomach. Which is the flow of **chi**.

If a person's energy levels are depleted then the stomach will not function as effectively.

In other words the stomach will not be able to digest food as well if the flow of chi is depleted.

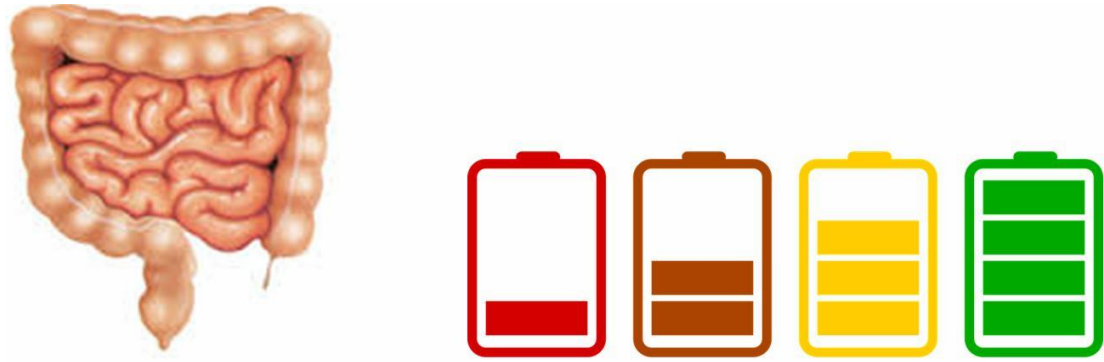
*The stomach is therefore **dependent on the flow of chi** for proper digestion of food*



*The proper functioning of the **liver** depends on the flow of power, or **chi**, to it*

Same as for the stomach.

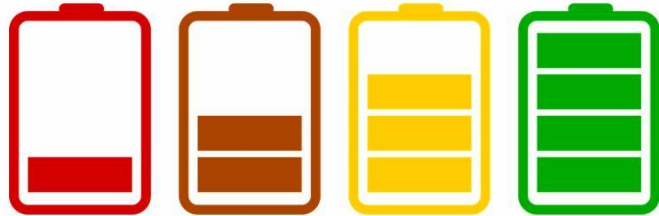
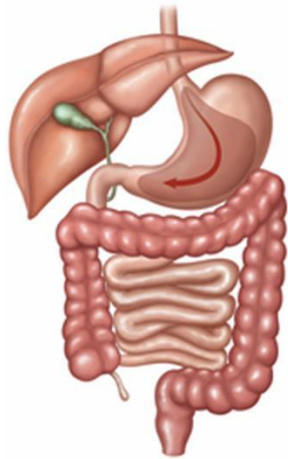




*The proper functioning of the **intestines** depends on the flow of power, or **chi**, to it*

Same as for the stomach and the liver. You see it's the same for *all* the digestive organs.

Let us illustrate that now.



*The proper functioning of the **entire digestive system** depends on the flow of power, or **chi**, to it*

If a person's chi is depleted then everything is affected. Every organ will be affected. Stomach, liver, pancreas, intestines – all will operate below par.

Conversely if the flow of chi to the organs is good, then all of the organs will function more optimally.

That's the idea.

Let us check and see if everyone is with me so far.

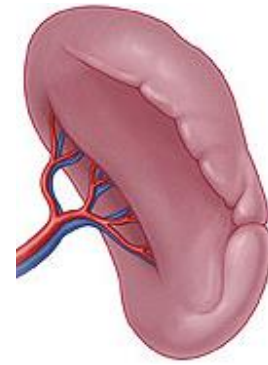
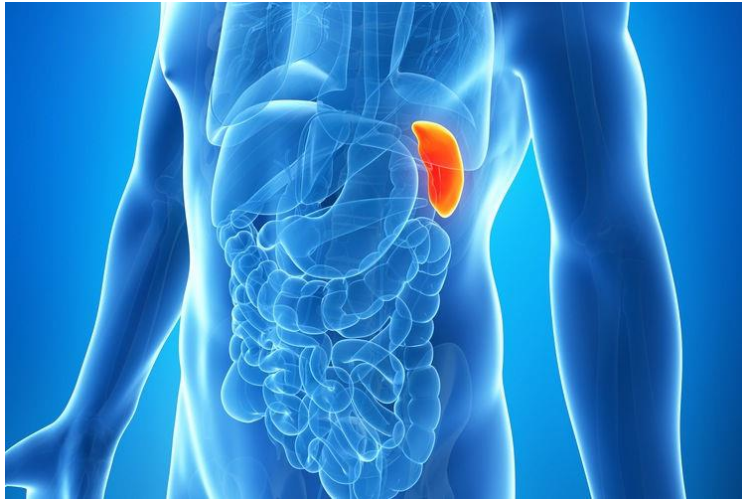


*“Mr. Slate, do you understand that the proper functioning of the digestive system depends on the proper flow of energy to it?”*

*“No, Ciarán! The organs function independently of any energy! There’s no such thing as chi! Just as there’s no such thing as magik!”*

*“Thank you, Mr. Slate”*

Now, moving on.



## *Now, what does the spleen do?*

The spleen has a number of functions in the body. But the one we are interested in here is its role in regulating the flow of energy, or *chi*, to the digestive organs.

### *The spleen regulates the flow of chi to the digestive organs*

Which means that the proper functioning of every organ in the digestive system is dependent on the spleen.

If spleen energy is low or deficient then this has an impact on every digestive organ.

This is one of two key reasons why the spleen is the most important organ for regulating the digestion.

*(The other reason is to do with the digestive system, as understood by Western Medicine, digesting the **physical** nutrients, such as amino acids (proteins), lipids (fats), water and so forth whereas the **energetic** aspect of food – its chi aspects – this part is regulated by the spleen. In Chinese Medicine the chi aspect of food is considered, **rightly** considered, to be more important than the physical nutrient aspect. Which is why the spleen is considered primary. However it is generally not recognised in Western Medicine that the energy of food either exists or should be taken into consideration. Nothing exists in the mind of Western Medicine except those physical nutrients which can be seen under the microscope. There is no chi in Western Medicine and therefore no energetic content in food. For example if one irradiates food, in Chinese Medicine that food would be considered inedible because all chi has been destroyed. But in Western Medicine there is no difference to the food. Because the nutrients remain. Even if the food is now dead.*

*This is well known to Chinese Medicine. But the other reason, the one I have given in this chapter, is one I have not heard explained this way before. Which is why I give it now. For I think this reason may be one that scientists can more easily understand.)*



*“But this function of the spleen in regulating chi is an **energetic** function, not physical, and so still works even if the spleen is removed”*

*“Thanks Béibhinn, I almost forgot that! Yes, we’d better include that now.”*

If a person’s spleen is amputated, the **physical** spleen is removed. But that person can still digest. How is that?

Let us explain that.

Actually, that’s a big one, and it brings us into new areas. Better start a new chapter!

# **Chinese Medicine:** Why the Spleen governs Digestion



**End**