

Life Begins With a Breath®
The Chinese Medicine Guide to Health
Courtesy of the Goodman Wellness Clinic

Your tongue tells a story

By looking at your tongue a good acupuncturist or Chinese herbalist can be pretty accurate in assessing your state of health. He or she can tell you if you haven't slept well, details about your digestion, and even the state of your emotions. All they need is for you to open your mouth and stick out your tongue.

How can you see all of that in my tongue?

Well, it's actually pretty simple. Your tongue is a mirror, at least with regard to your state of health. The tongue shape, the body color, the coating's thickness or lack of, the coating's color, and the moisture level are key factors in determining what may be right or wrong, as I like to say, "out of balance."

How was tongue diagnosis developed?

Chinese medicine practitioners, like modern doctors have been sharing information with each other for centuries. They found that certain tongue qualities were connected with certain symptoms like, for example, a pale tongue body and teeth-marks along the sides seemed to be found predominantly in patients with fatigue, muscle weakness, poor appetite and a weak pulse. It took many years to develop the system that is used today. It is remarkable because even with the differences of opinion that have developed over the years in other diagnostic methods, the tongue has remained unanimously consistent.

Can I look at my own tongue and know my health?

Absolutely: you won't be able to get a detailed understanding, but you will be able to get a general idea that could warn you to change a certain habit or two. For example, if your tongue tip is turning red you may be staying up way too late, or if your tongue coating is thick and white you may be eating too much dairy. Of course, if you change your behavior and the tongue remains the same, you may need a specific diagnosis and should give Steven Goodman L.Ac. a call at 949-460-9378.

What do the colors mean?

The tongue body colors are:

- Red: indicating heat (Yang) of any kind.

- White or pale: indicating cold (Yin) of any kind.
- Pink: is the most optimal (balance of Yin and Yang).

There are variations, such as dark red, light red, white, pale etc. all indicating varying degrees of hot and cold.

What is hot (Yang) and cold (Yin)?

Good health is the balance of hot and cold in the body. A woman in menopause would have symptoms of heat. Those symptoms are hot flashes, night sweats, anxiety, insomnia, and a *red tongue* with little coating. A child that is lethargic, with a poor appetite, catches cold frequently, and a *pale tongue* would be considered cold.

What does the tongue coating mean?

The tongue coating indicates two things:

- The severity of the disease.
- The state of the spleen and stomach (your digestion).

A healthy tongue coating is thin and white. An unhealthy tongue coating can be scanty (peeled) or thick with colors varying from white, yellow, gray, to black (black being the most severe state of imbalance). If you wake up with a thick tongue coating that you scrape off in the morning only to find it later in the day then there is something out of balance in your body. You should get it checked out by a Chinese Medicine practitioner.

Tongue Topography

Each area of the tongue is associated with an organ. It is because of these correlations that a practitioner can also derive a patient's state of health. The areas and their organ relationship:

- **The tongue tip:** *The heart*
- **The area just behind the tip:** *The lung*
- **The sides of the tongue:** *The liver and gall bladder*
- **The center:** *The spleen and stomach*
- **The back:** *The kidney, urinary bladder, triple burner, intestines*

An example of the heart being affected is a red tip with little coating. Usually, it a pattern of heart heat with symptoms of stress, irritability, and insomnia.

Putting it all together

Now you have a chance at keeping an eye on your own health. The tongue does not lie. It has no emotion or hidden agenda so just observe it for changes.

Quick tips to alter your tongue

Red tongue body:

- More fruits and veggies.
- Avoid spicy and greasy foods.
- Reduce alcohol and red meats.
- Get more sleep.
- Begin a Tai Chi, yoga or meditation class.

Pale tongue body:

- Get more exercise.
- Eat more cooked and spicy foods.
- Avoid cold and raw foods.
- Drink ginger tea.
- Add more red meat to the diet in small portions.

These are just the basics in terms of the tongue, if you want more detail give Steven Goodman L.Ac. a call at 949-460-9378.

Constipation Reminder

It has only been a month since your last newsletter about constipation, but I just want to keep you thinking. Remember it is important to go everyday. If you are only going every other day or just once a week then something is wrong with your digestion. Again try the following changes:

- Prune juice or prunes alone.
- Carrot juice a glass a day.
- Young barley grass drink.
- Unfiltered apple juice.
- Eat at regular times.
- The belly massage.

Most of the products except the belly massage can be found at your local store or health food store. The belly massage can be found in your past newsletters. If you forgot it, then call me at the office and I will walk you through it over the phone.

Your body is just a reflection of your health so just take a few moments and listen.

Take Care, Steven Goodman L.Ac.