

Discover Your Chinese Element, Plus Which NSP Chinese Herbs Will Work Best For You

By Steven Horne

What Element Are You?

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), a 2,500 plus year-old system of healing, there are five basic constitutional types, based on the five Chinese elements: water, wood, fire, earth and metal. Balancing these elements is a key to maintaining health. To find out which element(s) you need to balance, look over the list of characteristics below. If the personality trait or health tendency currently describes you, put a 2 in the white box to the right of the characteristic. If it is a problem or trait you used to have, put a 1 in the box. Total your scores at the bottom.

Characteristics	Water	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal
Abdominal pain or discomfort					
Angry and defensive					
Anxious and nervous					
Arthritis or osteoporosis					
Asthma, hayfever or bronchitis					
Bad breath or foul belching					
Burning or painful urination					
Cravings for sugar					
Discouraged or depressed					
Easily excited					
Fearful, indecisive or timid					
Feeling "burned-out"					
Feeling overwhelmed					
Food sits heavy on stomach					
Forgetful or absent-minded					
Frequent colds					
Frequent digestive problems					
Frequent respiratory problems					
Frequent urinary problems					
Gallbladder problems					
Headaches or migraines					
Intestinal gas and bloating					
Irritable and impatient					
Lack of muscle tone or underweight					
Loss of appetite or poor appetite					
Low back pain or backache					
Muscle tension or cramps					
Morning fatigue or sluggishness					
Nervous and excitable					
Prostate or vaginal problems					
Reserved and analytical					
Restless sleep or disturbed dreams					
Sinus headaches or congestion					

Skin problems (acne, rashes, etc.)					
Tightness in chest					
Waking up frequently at night					
Water retention or edema					
Weak knees, legs or ankles					
Wheezing or shortness of breath					
Withdrawn, grieving or sad					
Total each column here:					

What Do My Results Mean?

Each of the five elements of Chinese medicine—wood, fire, earth, metal and water—represent certain basic biochemical processes. Identifying which elements are out of balance, gives us a “big picture” of what is going on in the body. This approach works well with herbs, because herbs also work on whole body processes.

Whichever element you score the highest in is probably the primary biological process that could use some balancing in the body. By taking an herbal formula designed to balance these basic metabolic functions, you bring your whole body into greater balance, and hence, greater health. Here is a description of each of the five types. Read the one(s) you scored highest in first.

Are You a Wood Person?

Wood is symbolic of life and renewal. In Chinese philosophy, it is associated with assertiveness, aggressiveness, strong drives and anger. When the wood element is weak, that drive is diminished, making a person feel discouraged or depressed.

Wood relates to the organs of the liver and gallbladder. The liver is the biochemical mastermind of the body. It is the major center for neutralizing environmental toxins and the primary organ for preparing nutrients for transport through the blood stream. The Chinese say that the liver builds the blood. The gallbladder helps digest fats, which are essential to healthy skin, nerves and glands. It also serves as an avenue for eliminating toxins.

When the liver is overworked, a person will tend to feel irritable and cranky. They may be restless and unable to get to sleep at night, but feel groggy and “hung-over” in the morning. Hypoglycemia, migraine headaches, PMS symptoms, allergies, abdominal pain and skin conditions can all occur when the liver is thus burdened. LIV-C reduces this excess wood energy, supporting the liver and gallbladder in reducing the toxic load in the body.

People who are deficient in wood energy experience weakness in the liver and gallbladder. This results in an inability to move forward in a constructive manner and possible feelings of discouragement and depression. Physically, this chronic weakness of the liver and gallbladder energy would result in fatigue, anemia, menstrual problems, intestinal inflammation, abdominal pain and chronic liver problems.

To strengthen this deficiency of wood energy **BP-C** would be the formula of choice. Blood Build is especially good for anemia in women or women with scanty menses or prolonged menstrual cycles. It is also helpful for people with vague health problems that doctors say are “all in their head,” making the person feel like a hypochondriac.

Are You a Fire Person?

It's pretty easy to relate to what the element of fire symbolizes. We talk about an excited person as being "all fired up" or a passionate person as being "hot" or "on fire." Fire is the element of enthusiasm, drive, desire and passion. If you are a person who is full of fire you will be lively, dynamic, outgoing and enthusiastic. When that fire is deficient, you'll feel "burned-out."

In TCM, fire relates to the heart and circulatory system. Fire also relates to the nerves and glands, systems the Chinese called the triple warmer and the sex energy.

An excess of "fire" in TCM refers to a high-strung, highly stressed person. Such a person might experience anxiety, insomnia, absent-mindedness, extremes of emotion, nervousness and tension, dizziness, light-headedness, mania or even heart palpitations. To quench this excess fire, the STR-C is a good choice. It "pacifies the spirit," as the Chinese would say, or in other words, "calms the nerves."

As we have indicated, a person who has lost their fire would feel "burned-out." This manifests as fatigue with restless and disturbed sleep patterns. The person feels overwhelmed, tired, nervous but exhausted, and may suffer from emotional sensitivity, muddled thinking, mental confusion, loss of short term memory, loss of sexual desire, and sensations of pressure and pain in the chest that make them feel like something is wrong with their heart.

HS-C nourishes this deficient fire energy, helping the person to achieve restful sleep and restore their energy. It reduces feelings of stress and fatigue, while clearing the mind and helping to restore a sense of passion to a person's life.

Are You an Earth Person?

Maybe you're not the "fired-up" kind. Maybe you're more "down to earth." Earth symbolizes the nurturing mother energy, sympathetic, nurturing, prone to worry and fret and maybe over-mother people. Earth people tend to try to do too much for others often to the neglect of self.

Considering the association of earth with mothering, it's very easy to understand how this earth energy could be associated with our digestive system, the stomach and pancreas. The stomach receives our food and initiates the digestive process required to nourish us. The pancreas secretes enzymes to finish the process.

However, the earth energy doesn't stop with digestion. In Chinese medicine, the "spleen" was thought to be the organ that transforms the food we eat into flesh or muscle mass. So, the entire process of metabolizing food, and protein in particular, is associated with the Chinese earth element.

AG-C is an earth reducing formula that works well for occasional acute indigestion (acid stomach, acid reflux, gas, bloating, foul belching, etc.). It is also a good formula for the person who has a "do it all" kind of attitude where they take on too much trying to help other people. As a result they wind up with worry, stress and the frequent digestive upset that accompanies it.

For the person whose digestion has become weakened, so they are not assimilating nutrients (especially protein) very effectively, the earth increasing **UC-C** is a better choice. This is an excellent formula for people who are thin, pale and unable to gain muscle mass. It warms and strengthens the digestive organs and improves metabolic efficiency.

Are You a Metal Person?

Metal is the stuff that swords and shields are made of, so it should be of little surprise that the guarded, aloof, socially-correct person has a lot of “metal” in them. If you’re a metal person, you may have a lot of unacknowledged grief and sadness inside, so you may have shielded yourself to avoid experiencing more emotional pain.

The Chinese associate the metal element with the lungs and colon, but it might be more correct to say that the metal element is related to the mucus membranes which line both of these systems. These membrane linings are the body’s first line of immune defense. Most infections will enter through this route. So, metal is also symbolic of our immune response—swords and shields, again.

When there is a tendency to acute respiratory congestion, bronchitis, asthma, wheezing, coughing, allergies, sinus headaches, etc. the metal-reducing formula **AL-C** can help to open up the congested respiratory passages. The Western formula **AL-J** is also good for these conditions.

For chronic weakness of the lungs, prolonged grieving, chronic deep coughs, tightness of the chest and other conditions that suggest chronic weakness of the metal energy in the body, **LH-C** is a metal supporting formula that strengthens this primary line of immune defense. It can also help deeply repressed grief and sadness and the inability to express this emotional pain. It’s good for people who are aloof and emotionally distant.

Are You a Water Person?

Water symbolically represents fluidity, or the ability to “go with the flow.” Hence, if you’re a person who is like water you will be yielding, flexible and easy-going. You may also be timid, fearful and “wishy-washy” at times. This is why an excess of fear is thought to be harmful to the kidneys and bladder, the organs logically associated with the water element in Chinese medicine.

The kidneys do more than eliminate water and waste, however. They also regulate pH in the blood and maintain fluid and mineral balance. This helps explain how the kidneys in Chinese medicine also came to be associated with the bones. Weak kidneys create weak bones. This is because waste acids can’t be flushed efficiently from the body causing mineral loss from the bones.

When excess water and water-like personality tendencies are too strong in the body, the Chinese **K-C** formula will help to eliminate excess water from the body. This formula is helpful for edema, scant or clear urine, heavy sluggish feelings, bladder infections and burning urination. It can also help people who are timid, fearful and indecisive.

When there is a loss of the water-quality in the body, creating brittleness and stiffness, the Chinese formula **KB-C** (will strengthen both the kidneys and the bones. This formula not only aids chronic urinary problems, it also builds the bones. It is helpful for spinal misalignment, chronic backache (especially in the low back), weak knees and ankles, arthritis and osteoporosis. It is also helpful for people who lack “backbone” or have become so hardened, inflexible and rigid in their thought processes that they can no longer flow with the changes in their lives.

Using Chinese Formulas

When using a Chinese formula pick the one that most closely matches your profile and use it first (see the next page for a list of NSP Chinese herbs). After that area improves, you can try another formula if you have another strong imbalance. Be sure to take a sufficient dose. Many formulas call for as many as 3 or 4 capsules two or three times daily. Also, most people need to take the formula for three to six months for best results.

FORMULAS for YANG/STRESS/EXCESS CONDITIONS**CONSTITUTIONS****FORMULAS for YIN/WEAK/DEFICIENT CONDITIONS****LIV-C (Brings about harmony)**

Normalizes liver and gallbladder function; reduces hyperactivity; strengthens digestion; relieves nervous stress; nourishes blood; regulates menstruation; relieves cramping and tension; calms agitation and irritation; enhances circulation of Chi.

Stock# 1862-8

**WOOD
(Liver)****BP-C (Nourishes the blood)**

Enhances immune functions; normalizes menstruation; normalizes liver and cellular functions; vitalizes blood circulation; softens responses; increases decisiveness; strengthens Chi; strengthens lower body.

Stock# 1882-1

STR-C (Pacifies the spirit)

Normalizes heart functions; calms the nervous system; relieves inflammation; settles rising Chi; opens up circulation of Chi in the chest; clears Chi that irritates the intestines and urinary tract; reduces excitability; stabilizes emotions; improves memory; purges excess Chi.

Stock# 1871-0

**FIRE
(Heart)****HS-C (Nurtures the heart)**

Nourishes the blood; tonifies Yin; normalizes the heart functions; improves circulation in the chest; strengthens lower body; clarifies mind; improves memory; strengthens will; strengthens Chi and Yang; nurtures the heart.

Stock# 1884-7

AG-C (Clears the congestion)

Clears stagnant moisture in the digestive system; relieves reaction to foods; settles nausea; normalizes appetite; normalizes the digestive system and the nerves; relieves congestion of the gastrointestinal tract and the joints; broadens interests; expands thinking.

Stock# 1870-4

**EARTH
(Pancreas/
Spleen)****UC-C (Warms the centre)**

Enhances absorption and utilization of nutrients; removes excessive moisture; normalizes the digestive functions; strengthens the muscles supporting the internal organs; activates circulation of Chi in the interior and the limbs; increases responsiveness.

Stock# 1891-4

AL-C (Ventilates the lungs)

Removes congestion; improves digestion; normalizes lung functions, clears phlegm; relieves inflammation; aids circulation in the upper body; helps one to look up and let go of the past; relaxes defensive posture; tonifies Chi; deepens breathing.

Stock# 1864-0

**METAL
(Lungs)****LH-C (Supports the weak)**

Moistens dryness; reduces feverish feeling; aids utilization of nutrients; normalizes lung functions; relaxes tension in the chest; restores sense of power and strength; tonifies and consolidates Chi.

Stock# 1890-3

K-C (Clears the dampness)

Removes excess moisture; relieves swelling; restores normal function of the kidney and bladder; normalizes tissues of the urinary tract; relieves the stress of edema; clarifies and focuses attention; clears excessive moisture.

Stock# 1872-5

**WATER
(Kidneys)****KB-C (Strengthens the bones)**

Improves hearing; regulates hormones; normalizes function of kidney and bladder; strengthens will and drive; tonifies Chi and Yang.

Stock# 1883-3

IF-C (Clears the heat)

Cools the blood; clears the excess; normalizes tissues of the head; activates circulation of Chi and blood; calms agitation; harmonizes internal feelings with external expression; clears excess Chi.

Stock# 1874-3

**HEAT/DRYNESS
(Subdivision
of Wood)****HY-C (Nourishes the Yin)**

Moistens the dryness; regulates the hormones and the circulation; strengthens lower body; cools the blood; strengthens will; relaxes overbearing nature; tonifies and regulates the Chi.

Stock# 1885-0

AD-C (Relieves the depression)

Settles agitation; disperses congested Chi, moisture, and blood; regulates the hormones; relieves tightness in the chest and congestion; activates circulation of Chi and blood; opens a wider view of the world; relieves emphasis on personal conditions; promotes circulation of Chi.

Stock# 1877-2

**ENERGY
(Two formulas
to balance the
Chi [energy] in
individuals)****IMM-C (Generates the pulse)**

Restores normal organ functions; nourishes the blood; strengthens the bones; regulates the moisture; normalizes the immune system; enhances circulation; improves outlook on life; tonifies Chi and Yang.

Stock# 1892-6