

## HEALTH

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## TCM: Eloquent eyes

In a traditional Chinese medicine examination, if the eyes are bright and properly moistened, the patient usually has a favourable prognosis; poor vision, dull or dry eyes indicate that the health problem is difficult to treat.

TCM holds that eyes receive nourishing essence from all the body's organs; therefore they reflect your state of vitality. The eyes also act as openings of the liver onto the body's surface. Different parts of the eyes have corresponding organs so close observation of the eyes can help in diagnosis.

When the body has excessive heat, the eyes may be irritated and turn red. Redness at the corner of the eyes indicates heart fire; bleeding spots on the whites of the eye shows lung fire; inflamed eyelids mean spleen fire; liver fire attacks the eyeball which leads to pink eyes and conjunctivitis. Jaundiced (yellow) eyes are said to indicate overflowing bile due to damp-heat irritating the gall-bladder. Blood deficiency will show as paleness of the inner eyelid surface and canthus.

TCM practitioners can also evaluate eye discharge to design treatment.

If lung heat stimulates eye discharge and forms a crust, mulberry leaf and chrysanthemum are selected. Excessive discharge that does not form a crust means the lungs need to be nourished by herbs such as rehmannia root and

dwarf lily-turf tuber. Stringy mucus in or around the eyes indicates damp-heat in the liver, so wormwood herb and gardenia fruit should be chosen. Toxic heat will turn sticky mucus yellowish, indicating the need to use herbs like golden thread rhizome and Chinese cypress. Clear watery or dry eyes may be due to the liver and kidneys failing to control the tear glands. Therefore, chrysanthemum, wolfberry, rehmannia root and dendrobium are used.

Eyelid problems may relate to organ dysfunctions. Bluish discoloration is seen in liver stagnation while a dull and greenish-dark discoloration is usually due to kidney deficiency. Spleen weakness will cause eyelid puffiness, or cause them to become flabby or droop.

Elderly people usually have flaccid and swollen lower eyelids, which is a sign of both spleen and kidney deficiency. Eyelid twitching can be caused by either an attack of wind-heat pathogens or under-nourishment of the local meridians. In children, sleeping with partially open eyes indicates spleen weakness; and grey spots on the white of the eye may betray roundworm disease.

Sunken eyes often seen after vomiting, diarrhoea or major bleeding mean insufficient body fluids and blood; if this happens in critical conditions, then the prognosis is not good. Bulging eyes with a swollen neck, palpitations, a big

appetite but skinny physique points to a thyroid problem. Bulging eyes with breathing difficulties, inability to lie flat, palpitations, purplish complexion and lips indicate a lung problem. An eyeball protruding on one side may suggest a brain tumour.

Dysfunctions in the liver and kidney usually lead to visual disturbances, such as floaters, eyestrain, poor eyesight and night blindness. Besides making changes in work habits or the environment, TCM

also recommends taking herbs that invigorate the liver and kidney to promote eye function, such as cornus fruit, wolfberry, cistanche, motherwort seed, walnut, black soybean, euryale seed and chrysanthemum.

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