

HEALTH

Edited by Suzanne Harrison suzanne.harrison@scmp.com

TCM

Rose Tse and Angela Collingwood
info@sheng-nong.com

Blood and chi

When a patient has symptoms of a pale complexion, dizziness and fatigue, a western-trained doctor may do a blood test to see if anaemia is the cause. However, in traditional Chinese medicine, a blood deficiency may be diagnosed even if the test comes back normal. In TCM, a blood deficiency is often seen in those with chronic diseases, emotional disturbances or menstrual problems, and in vegetarians.

Instead of studying things at a cellular level, TCM focuses on the body as a whole. Blood is viewed simply as the fluid that provides nutrition for the body.

The nutrients transported by blood aren't restricted to physical materials. Its meaning can be extended to anything that provides nourishment to the body. Blood can be viewed as a physical and fluid manifestation of *chi* (vital energy). Red cheeks, strong muscles, lustrous hair and skin are evidence of the proper

nourishing and moistening capacities of blood.

Weakened blood formation, over-consumption of blood or decreased blood function in nourishing and moistening may lead to a localised or general deficiency. Symptoms include dizziness, a dull complexion, dry hair and skin and numb limbs. Rarer symptoms – such as heart palpitations, blurred vision, poor memory, insomnia, scanty periods, delayed menstruation, absence of menstruation, sexual dysfunction or psychiatric disorders – can be linked to a blood deficiency, as well.

Someone who suffers from a blood deficiency may also have an accompanying *chi* deficiency, as blood and *chi* affect each other.

The *chi* not only moves the blood around the body, but also helps in blood production and holds blood in the vessels.

Routine TCM treatment tones the blood and strengthens *chi*. Practitioners will identify the most affected organs and create remedies. For example, impotence is commonly linked to a blood and *chi* deficiency arising from heart and spleen dysfunction. This means blood and *chi* can't transform into

sexually related elements. A remedy called "return of spleen function" or *gui pi tang* may be prescribed.

Atractylodes root, milkvetch root, ginseng, ginger, jujube fruit and liquorice root fortify the spleen and replenish the *chi*. Angelica root nourishes the liver to promote heart functions. Indian bread, spine date and longan aril nourish the heart and calm the spirit. When the body achieves adequate *chi* levels and normal heart function, abundant blood will be produced.

Chinese senega improves communication between the heart and kidneys. Costus root acts as a buffer. The combination aims at fortifying the heart and spleen functions, which, in turn, improves overall sexual functioning.

This formula can be found in Chinese medicine pharmacies in a ready-made pill or can be prescribed by a TCM practitioner as a decoction. It's important to get a diagnosis from a practitioner before taking this prescription, as there can be other causes of impotence that need different treatments.

Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner