

The Lantern



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Yang Sheng according to the time of day

By Assoc Professor Qu Li-Min
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子时 **Zǐ shí: 11 pm to 1 am. This is the time of the earthly branch zǐ when the effect of the Gallbladder channel is predominant.**

It is a strange phenomenon that while we are often tired around eight or nine o'clock in the evening, by 11 pm we often get a "second wind", enough that for many people this is their preferred time of day to work. Others become hungry and go rummaging for a snack. The reason for this is that the zǐ time is precisely when yang qi begins to recover and regenerate. Thus a very important principle in *yangsheng* is to be asleep before 11 pm in order to slowly begin to nourish this vital

mechanism. Sleep and health are crucially related, as sleep cultivates the yang qi. Zǐ is the darkest time of the 24-hour day. Yin has reached its peak and yang qi begins its re-emergence. The *Huang Di Nei Jing* says: "The 11 zang all hinge upon Gallbladder."^a This means that when the qi in the Gallbladder channel arises, only then all the qi and blood around the body begins its resurgence. Thus getting into the habit of being asleep before 11 pm is most important.

丑时 **Chǒu shí: 1 am to 3 am. This is the time of the earthly branch chǒu when the effect of the Liver channel is predominant.**

It is absolutely imperative that one is

a. 凡十一藏皆取决于胆

The Lantern is a journal of Chinese medicine and its related fields, with an emphasis on the traditional view and its relevance to clinic. Our aim is to encourage access to the vast resources in this tradition of preserving, maintaining and restoring health, whether this be via translations of works of past centuries or observations from our own generation working with these techniques, with their undeniable variability. The techniques are many, but the traditional perspective of the human as an integral part, indeed a reflection, of the social, meteorological and cosmic matrix remains one. We wish to foster that view.

asleep during this time to maintain healthy Liver function. The character *chǒu* is the image of a bound hand, and symbolises that although yang qi is in its resurgence, it must be restrained and controlled, or in other words, ascent must contain descent, and in this way, by sleeping well at these hours, Liver blood will be nourished.

寅时 Yīn shí: 3am to 5 am. This is the time of the earthly branch yīn when the effect of the Lung channel is predominant.

This is a time of transition when people will gradually turn from quiescence toward activity. The deepest sleep occurs between 3 and 5 o'clock in the morning, just when the qi and blood are going from quiet into movement. This process has to take place through deep sleep. Older people with poor heart function ideally should not engage in physical exercise early in the morning, and should sleep until a bit later in the morning. Later in the afternoon or when it is a bit hazy is the best time for these patients to be active, as then activity will counter the increasing yin. In the morning they should move gently and in harmony with the growth of yang qi.

卯时 Mǎo shí: 5 am to 7 am. This is the time of the earthly branch mǎo when the effect of the Large Intestine channel is predominant.

The sky has usually brightened by this time of the morning, the “heavens have opened”^b and to wake up around dawn at 5 am is considered normal. In the morning it is normal to eliminate toxins and other garbage from the body by urinating and passing stool; this is “opening the earthly gates” and it is a good thing to develop the habit of early morning elimination. Lungs and Large Intestine are related; only if Lung qi is sufficient will the Large Intestine function properly.

辰时 Chén shí: 7 am to 9 am. This is the time of the earthly branch chén when

b. *Tian men kai* which also refers, in qigong, to the qi circulation reaching *Baihui* (DU 20), whereas *Di hu kai* refers to qi reaching *Huiyin* (REN 1). This of course happens in the normal qi circulation following the daily rhythm, which is what is referred to here; it does not require qigong for it to occur.

the effect of the Stomach channel is predominant.

The Stomach channel is one of the longest on the anterior part of the body, and while we know that if there is epigastric pain there is a problem in the Stomach channel, our patients might not always appreciate that if there is knee pain the problem also often originates in the Stomach channel, and the same with pain on the superior portion of the foot. This is the usual time to eat breakfast, supplementing nourishment to the body. It is also the time when the yang qi of heaven and earth is most flourishing, and thus breakfast is the easiest meal to digest. Eating a lot for breakfast will never make you fat. Both Spleen and Stomach are transporting, so one should enjoy a full breakfast, which is as beneficial as a spring rain.

巳时 Sì shí: 9am to 11 am. This is the time of the earthly branch sì when the effect of the Spleen channel is predominant.

Spleen controls transport, and so the breakfast one has just enjoyed will be digested and distributed during this time. Our stomach is like a pot; when we eat, how does it digest the food that we eat? Through fire, gradually digesting everything in the stomach. And what is the Spleen? The character for Spleen is made up of two halves. The right half is the image of a young maid, she who tends the fire in the kitchen, adding kindling and firewood and fanning the flame as needed for cooking. Among the five zang, Spleen most resembles that busy servant. If she is sick, however, everybody in this great mansion of the body suffers, perhaps with what is known as “rich people’s diseases” such as diabetes. Emaciation, excessive saliva, oedema: all these are indications of Spleen disorder.

午时 Wǔ shí: 11am to 1 pm. This is the time of the earthly branch wǔ when the effect of the Heart channel is predominant.

The time of *wǔ* is opposite the time of *zǐ* (11 pm – 1 am) and thus also a pivotal time for the qi mechanism of heaven and earth; the human body also feels the effects of this transformation of qi. For the average person,



Sleep and health are crucially related, as sleep cultivates the yang qi.

■ Nine complete volumes of Lantern editorials are available online: www.thelantern.com.au

being asleep by 11 pm is extremely important, as is a nap after the noon meal – if one cannot actually sleep then at least closing the eyes for a while will be beneficial. This is because during the time of the heaven and earth transformation of qi, one does not want to stir it up, so we should rest and “face change with stillness” as the proverb says. Having a sleep is the best thing we can do.

未时 Wèi shí: 1 pm to 3 pm. This is the time of the earthly branch wèi when the effect of the Small Intestine channel is predominant. Small Intestine controls absorption of essential nutrition from the food stuffs that have been broken down by the Spleen and Stomach. This essence is subsequently distributed around the body to the various organs and their structures. Lunch should be a special meal at which one eats well,

selecting foods with rich nutritional value. Heart and Small Intestine are related on the interior and exterior. The exterior is yang, the interior is yin. If yang develops a problem, yin will also develop a problem, and vice-versa. Cardiac problems in their very early stage very possibly manifest along the Small Intestine channel. Some patients feel tightness in the chest and anxiety every day around 2 o'clock in the afternoon, but even if they go to the hospital nothing shows up on the investigations. The reason is that Small Intestine is yang: it is the outside. When there are problems in the sensitive places on the outside, the inside – which is the heart organ itself – will definitely have problems.

申时 Shēn shí: 3 pm to 5 pm. This is the time of the earthly branch shēn when the effect of the Urinary Bladder channel is predominant.

The Urinary Bladder channel is relatively long, as it runs along the foot and the heel, along the back of the leg and next to the spine, where it has two branches, and extends over the upper back and head. Pain along the posterior aspect of the calf is usually a Urinary Bladder channel problem, and it also can be due to yang deficiency, which would indicate deficiency all along the *taiyang* channel. Similarly, occipital headache is also a Bladder channel problem, as is loss of memory, which can result from yang qi being unable to rise. Thus a feeling of tiredness or poor concentration at this time of day is often a sign of yang deficiency.

酉时 Yǒu shí: 5PM to 7 pm. This is the time of the earthly branch yǒu when the effect of the Kidney channel is predominant. The Kidneys store *jing*/essence. What

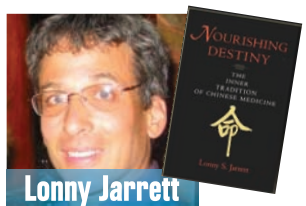
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is this *jing*/essence? It is like money in the bank. Any problems in the cells or tissues, *jing*/essence can supplement or support them. This essence contains the most creative and original power we have, and when we need something, *jing* is what will supply it. For example if we lack red blood cells, *jing* will be called upon to redress the balance and make up the difference. From another angle, the *yuan qi* is stored in the Kidneys, and this is the primal *qi* we are born with. This is why people in China, when they reach a certain age, always talk about “tonifying Kidneys”. Of course, one’s own digestive system comes into play as many of these tonics are difficult to digest. When Kidney *jing* is strong, one of its manifestations is ambition. Old people with insufficient *jing* don’t want to start up a new enterprise, but young people whose *jing* is strong don’t hesitate. So those who wish to

achieve great things should protect their *jing*/essence and their Kidneys in their youth.

戌时 *Xū shí*: 7 pm to 9 pm. This is the time of the earthly branch *xū* when the effect of the Pericardium channel is predominant.

Pericardium is just what its name implies: it is the external membranous tissue around the heart. Its main function is to protect the functioning of the cardiac muscle, so at this time, people should be getting ready for bed or already be asleep. It is said that the Heart does not suffer pathogenic attack but the Pericardium does. Many people with cardiac problems can be seen to have illness in the Pericardium channel. If you have severe tachycardia, this is pathogenic attack in the Pericardium channel: first one will feel palpitations, then the problem travels down the channel. The Pericardium

channel influences the emotions of happiness and joy, which is why people like to enjoy entertainment just around this time.

亥时 *Hài shí*: 9 pm to 11 pm. This is the time of the earthly branch *hài* when the effect of the San Jiao channel is predominant.

San Jiao is that reticular network that links the five *zang* and six *fu*, and must be free to flow openly and without obstruction. Any obstruction will lead to illness. *Hài* in the symbology of the earthly branches is the time of the pig, which eats until full then immediately sleeps with loud snores. Thus at the time of *hài* we should be resting and ideally already asleep, to allow the body and the *ling* and *hun* spirits restore themselves within a warm, deep and restful darkness. Within this darkness we recover and prepare for the beginning of a new day.

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