

# What a patient craves

**WHAT THE PATIENT CRAVES** should be cut down, but cannot be cut off

Each of the *zang* organs has *shen*/spirit, so whenever there is intense craving for something, this is a desire of the spirit of that *zang* organ. When the essential qi of a particular *zang* is insufficient, then it will seek help from a particular flavour to recover. For example, in pregnancy if Liver and Kidney are deficient there will be craving for sourness or saltiness. Old people have exhaustion of essence and blood, so they crave meat.

Thus those things that a patient might crave can only be reduced, they should not be completely cut out.

When patients have been taking herbs for a long time and are sick of it, then (in those illnesses for which it is safe to do so) it does not hurt to stop the herbs temporarily, while you encourage them to eat those things they crave

in moderate amounts. Once the Stomach qi has begun to flourish again it will itself provide long-term nourishment for their energy. If the illness is serious and medication must be continued, you should make the herbs balanced and harmonious, and easy for the patient to take; this avoids injury to the Stomach qi.

Those who fail to understand this rationale try to cut out completely those foods that the *zang*'s spirit craves, and insist on giving herbs that injure the Stomach qi.

Once the Stomach qi is damaged, the original source of life-supporting transformation (ie. the ability to digest food and fluids) is destroyed. There is little chance for cure or peace for the patient after that.

Feng Zhao-Zhang, 1694

*Mian Nang Mi Lu*

(Secret Records of the Cotton Pouch)

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