

HEALTH

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TCM: The eyes show it

According to western physiology, the liver is responsible for a number of important body functions, including the production and excretion of bile, which is used to break down fat and the detoxification of blood. However, according to traditional Chinese medicine, the liver's functions include control of the central nervous system, the autonomic nervous system and the circulatory system. The liver is also responsible for vision.

In TCM, the liver promotes flowing and spreading movements. By stimulating flow, the liver adjusts and ensures the smooth movement of *qi*, blood and body fluids, and spreads these substances to the entire body. There are three functional aspects of the liver's "flowing and spreading" activity: regulating *qi* and emotions, and enhancing the digestive properties of the spleen.

The activities of the organs and meridians depend on *qi* movement. The flow and spread of *qi* throughout the body in turn depend on the regulatory functions of the liver. If the liver isn't functioning properly, *qi* flow is interrupted, which can lead to disharmony and imbalance. When this becomes marked, disease and other health problems ensue.

The liver also balances emotions. Normal emotional health depends on the harmony of *qi* and blood. When the liver keeps *qi* flowing smoothly, a relaxed internal, emotional environment is created. If liver disharmony results in stagnant liver

qi, emotional disturbances such as depression and anger can occur.

The liver also adjusts the digestive functions of the spleen. If the liver isn't functioning properly, the transformation and transportation of digested food will be affected, leading to abdominal pain, nausea, belching, diarrhoea and other complications.

The liver is also responsible for storing and regulating blood flow. If a person has insufficient blood available for storage in the liver, their eyes won't be adequately nourished and will become rough and dry. Dizziness can also occur.

The eyes have a close relationship with the liver because they're connected to the liver meridian. Insufficient liver blood can lead to blurred vision. Dampness and heat of the liver and gallbladder, a condition known in western medicine as jaundice, manifests as yellow eyes.

The proper movement of tendons, which attach muscle to bone, is closely related to liver function. If the blood stored in the liver is insufficient and incapable of nourishing the tendons, symptoms such as spasms, numbness of limbs and difficulty bending or stretching occur. Finger and toenail health also relies on the liver. A deficiency will cause nails to become thin, brittle and pale.

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Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner