

Chinese Elements *Encourage* Healthy Ways

MARTIAL ARTS HAVE BEEN responsible for exposing many of us to Eastern culture which offers unique perspectives on how to understand our health and well-being. Many great martial arts masters were healers, and passed along the knowledge of Chinese medicine and health using a model that was said to reflect the greater cosmos. This wisdom, or model, is called the five elements, and it compares vital bodily functions to earthly elements. These five elements help explain phases in our body systems, and the interactions between those phases. The five elements model has been applied to fields of traditional Chinese medicine, music, military strategy and martial arts.

For martial arts, we believe that if these five basic processes are supported nutritionally, optimal health can be attained. Understanding the five elements, Earth, Wood, Fire, Metal, and Water, and each element's relationship to the functions of the body, offers age-old insights into a model that encourages us to help prevent disease or degenerative health issues, as well as to help with the aging process.

The challenge is to provide the body with what it needs to maintain health and to repair and regenerate. We all need an edge to help eliminate the impact that highly processed foods and environmental pollutants deliver to us every day. Our only defense is having a good offense, and that means proper nutritional balance. Here is a brief overview of the five elements of traditional Chinese medicine:

Metal | Metal supports your air intake and therefore the supply of oxygen to the body. Autumn is the season for Metal, and the sense of smell is prevalent. Chi Kung deep breathing is the ancient method of the East to build strength for the Metal organ – the lung.

Wood | Wood supports the living, growing structures of the body and the healthy replacement of all tissues and cells. Spring is the season for Wood, which is concerned with the detoxification of the liver, gall bladder and glands and relates to maintaining chemical-free organs in spite of the heavily processed foods we consume in the



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modern world. Lemon juice is great for the detoxification of the liver and easy to use.

Fire | Circulation and a healthy blood flow to all organs that provide overall anti-aging benefits is represented by Fire. Summer is the season for Fire and heart health is vital to maintaining heat in the body. Exercise strengthens Fire and the heart.

Earth | Supports the digestion and is vital to the nutritional efficacy our bodies need. Late summer is the season for Earth and the stomach, spleen and pancreas are vital to the intake of foods and the assimilation of nutrients. Consuming pro-biotics and digestive enzymes are an excellent way to help keep these organs strong and will support the improved health to lower back ailments. Some yogurts and other grocery store items are pro-biotic.

Water | The waste systems of the body and your bladder and kidneys are the organs associated with this element. Winter is the season for Water, and staying hydrated is very important this

time of year. Water supports your being and your body, through which all things pass. Water helps circulation of blood, carries heat and nourishment throughout the body, provides your ability to fight off infections, and for the flow of urine, saliva, perspiration, and tears. Water is also important for lymphatic flow which helps to process and eliminate wastes. Water is nourishing, refreshing and invigorating. Enjoy your eight glasses of water a day.

Water is also related to your emotions. An imbalance of water can cause fear, anxiety or negativity. From the Chinese viewpoint, individuals with deficient Water energy may find it difficult to slow down, relax or rest with an inability to reflect clearly. A balanced water element allows fluidity and flow, an ability to rest and to nourish oneself. Drinking plenty of fluids during the winter months is crucial for harmony and balance. Healthy teas are nice and warming during the winter months and are supportive to health by using natural additives such as peppermint. As always, talk with your physician for your personal health concerns. U