

■ TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Treating Body and Mind Through the Spleen

Obesity, insomnia, and depression can all result from trouble with the spleen

By Christopher Trahan

While Western medicine views disease as being biochemical or mechanical, in Chinese medicine, all disorders can involve both physical and psychological processes.

Therefore, when we talk about an organ in traditional Chinese medicine, it has a different scope than the Western organ with the same name (and for this reason, is capitalized in this article).

So, while Western spleen diseases all affect the “Spleen” of traditional Chinese medicine, the Spleen of Chinese medicine also includes other physiological functions.

In traditional Chinese medicine, the Spleen provides perhaps the most far-ranging array of physiological functions and is the most complex when compared to its Western equivalent organ.

The Spleen of Chinese medicine maintains our daily energy and metabolism. It includes our digestive system, our immune and lymphatic systems, our blood nutrients, and various aspects of our endocrine system.

The Spleen’s mental-emotional states are worry, overthinking, pensiveness, and rumination. In modern Western psychological terms, the Spleen relates to anxiety and nervousness and some forms of depression and insomnia.

In Chinese medicine terms, the Spleen “Governs Transpor-

tation and Transformation” of food and fluids. In Western terms, this includes digestion, assimilation, the distribution of nutrients, and the utilization of lipids, hormones, and electrolytes.

Imbalances in these functions of the Spleen produce most digestive disorders, including diarrhea and constipation, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, excess or lack of appetite, obesity or emaciation, eating disorders, water retention, and skin disorders such as acne and weeping eczema.

Dampness

In traditional Chinese medicine, wind, heat, cold, dryness, and dampness can unbalance the body and cause illness.

Spleen disorders are particularly affected when a person is exposed to damp environments. Damp weather aggravates conditions like diarrhea, edema, and excess mucous.

On both physical and mental levels, dampness is associated with dullness, slowness, and lack of energy. Dampness can weaken the Spleen energy, causing fatigue and lassitude, and can lead to hypothyroidism. When the Spleen is weak as a result of dampness, a person can develop environmental, seasonal, and food allergies, as well as yeast infections.

Taste

The taste associated with the Spleen is sweet. Craving sweets can indicate an imbalance in



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the Spleen, and over-consumption of sweets, including carbohydrates, can cause the Spleen to lose energy. Taken to the extreme, sweetness and excess dampness can lead to obesity. Deficient Spleen energy can also result in hypoglycemia and diabetes.

Insomnia

Spleen imbalance often occurs in combination with imbalances of other organs. Insomnia of all types relates to the heart, which is said to “house the mind” in Chinese medicine.

When people have trouble falling asleep, this relates to the blood of the Spleen failing to nourish the heart and is often due to over-thinking, anxiety, or worry.

Traditional Chinese medicine recognizes that the Spleen’s digestive function, which produces blood, relates to onset-insomnia. Chinese doctors

understood the sleep-stomach connection, thousands of years before modern Western medicine discovered that some 70 percent of serotonin metabolism occurs in the gut.

Treating the Spleen

In my practice, at least 30 percent of my patients experience frequent insomnia, and most of them have trouble falling asleep, which can occur both at the start of the night or when their sleep is interrupted.

In my practice, I always use formulas combining herbs to flesh out the benefits to the Spleen and to address other organs’ imbalances.

Chinese herbal medicine treats all deficient Spleen energy with formulas featuring ginseng and other Spleen tonics such as astragalus and atracylodes.

When we treat Spleen disorders such as excess dampness,

we use herbs such as hawthorn to enhance lipid digestion and utilization, and alisma to promote urination.

Global Herbal Medicine and Homeopathy

I also use global herbal medicine and homeopathy to treat spleen issues. In global herbal medicine, I use Ayurvedic and Western herbs to treat spleen syndromes.

In classical homeopathy, I treat these syndromes, including physical and mental-emotional issues, with one or more of homeopathy’s hundreds of plant-based remedies.

The homeopathic remedy Lycopodium treats digestive and mental symptoms associated with Spleen imbalances. I also use the remedy Ceanothus, which dilates the splenic artery, allowing more oxygenated blood to get to the spleen, which enhances the spleen’s

function as filtration.

I have found that classical homeopathy often achieves even more impressive results than traditional Chinese medicine and global herbal medicine when it comes to treating more severe psychological pathologies such as depression, anxiety, and insomnia. Homeopathy is also very effective in some cases of hormonal and immune disorders, including infertility and allergies.

Dr. Christopher Trahan, O.M.D., L.Ac., is the medical director of the Olympus Center for Holistic and Integrative Medicine. He is nationally board-certified in Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine (NCCA) and is a classically trained homeopathic physician. He has been in clinical practice for over 30 years. Complimentary consultation: Olympus-Center.com

Lasers Replacing Dental Drills

Solea laser best at removing tooth decay

By Andrew Koenigsberg

Would you choose prison over a dental injection or tooth drilling? According to one sales rep, in an informal survey, most people said they would choose prison.

While this finding may be unscientific, there is no deny-

ing that most people would skip the injection and the drilling if they could get their filling placed painlessly.

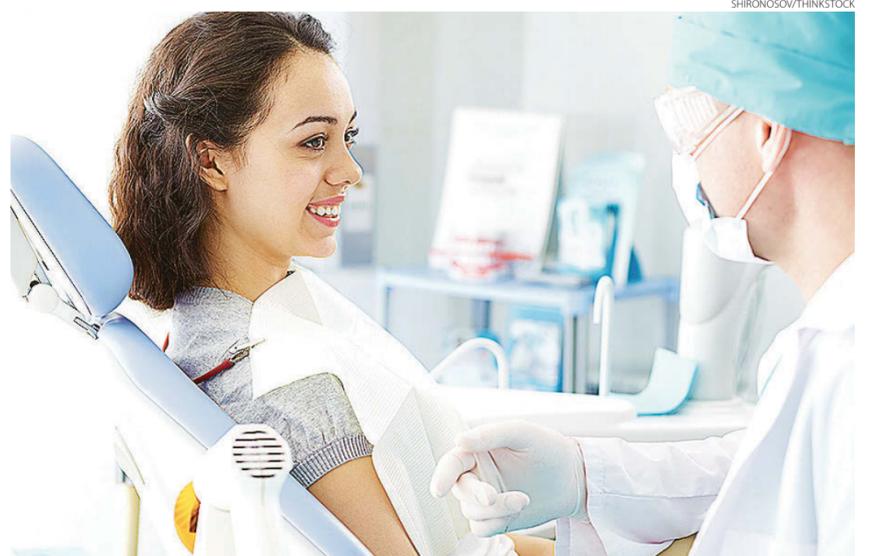
Thanks to the dental lasers, this is now a reality.

Unlike drills, which cause pain, lasers create a temporary numbing effect on the tooth. Even if the drill is needed for some final

touch-up work, it is still painless for the patient.

Lasers can be used to remove and replace old composite or plastic fillings and, in general, are most effective for small to medium fillings

In my office, we use the new Solea dental laser by Convergent Dental because it is the only one



Dental lasers allow many patients to have cavities filled painlessly without needing anesthetic.

that efficiently removes tooth decay. While there have been other lasers available for this, they are slower and thus not practical.

Solea lasers remove tooth decay by pulsing a light of a specific wavelength, which is highly absorbed by the mineral content in the tooth. The laser beam is just a quarter of a millimeter in size, allowing for the precise removal of the decay and conservation of the healthy tooth structure. The laser intensity is adjustable in real time, allowing dentists to ease up on the power if the patient is sensitive.

The Solea laser absorbs water well, so it is also very efficient in extracting gum tissue, which is made up of a high concentration of water. Often, this can be

Unlike drills, which cause pain, lasers create a temporary numbing effect.

done without an injection. This is advantageous for small biopsies, gum contouring, or any other soft tissue procedures. Introduced late last year, the Solea laser has FDA clearance for

cavity treatment and has gotten good ratings from patients who say it makes procedures pretty painless.

In a recent poll, over 95 percent of patients treated with Solea were able to have fillings placed with no anesthesia, and 98 percent of those patients did not report feeling any pain. This includes patients who are usually very sensitive and phobic.

Dr. Koenigsberg has been in practice since 1980 and is a partner at Gallery57Dental. G57D is a showcase for Sirona, the world’s largest dental equipment manufacturer. The office is fully digital and has been featured in Modern Dentistry as a prototype of the dental office of the future.



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