

THE PERICARDIUM

(Collated by Michelle Wilkinson www.movingnaturally.co.uk)

The pericardium is a tough yet silky fibroelastic sac that surrounds the surface of the heart except at the cardiac root where the great vessels (aorta, pulmonary trunk & veins and the superior & inferior vena cava) join the heart.

It is double-walled sac. Between the walls lies a pericardial fluid known as the serous which is secreted from the inner wall.

Serous fluid is like the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) of the central nervous system. It provides some movement for the heart in the same way as the CSF does for the brain.

Importantly serous fluid like CSF acts as a shock absorber protecting the heart from any jerks, jolts or traumas. As such it shields the heart from injury.

The pericardium separates the heart from surrounding mediastinal structures.

It creates a barrier to prevent infectious diseases from spreading from other organs, like the neighbouring lungs, into the heart.

The pericardium maintains the heart's position within the chest.

It has a constricting capacity and as such prevents the heart from over-filling with blood and aids blood circulation.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) the pericardium is considered on a psych-emotional level to support loving feelings and provide emotional protection for the heart. It can regulate levels of intimacy within relationships.

The pericardium could be viewed as a physical and emotional bodyguard to the heart. It also protects the blood and is regarded as 'mother of blood'.

The pericardium provides a circulation of energy (Ki) around the heart forming a protective buffer. This flow of Ki extends throughout the whole body.

Because it protects the heart the pericardium therefore protects the Shen which lies within the heart. The Shen is made stable as it will absorb shock or emotional trauma that might scatter it. Insomnia, mental agitation, incessant talking and manic behaviour can all be treated by the pericardium meridian known as the Heart Protector.

The Heart Protector Meridian begins immediately lateral to the nipple to ascend the breast to the axillary fold at the armpit. Here it descends the inside surface of the arm along the midline between the heads of the biceps across the midpoints of both the elbow and wrist creases to travel down through the centre of the palm and end on the radial side of the middle fingernail.

The acupuncture point HP8 named Palace of Anxiety, Labour or Weariness is in the centre of the palm where there is a depression between the second and third metacarpals. It is seen as a minor chakra. In its yin condition pressing it can restore vitality, vigour and love for life while in its yang state pressing it aids calming the mind from restlessness, worry and emotional stress.