

THE SPLEEN

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

The spleen is a purple coloured, oval-shaped organ 12cm (5inches) in length weighing 85-130 grams (3-5 ounces).

It is located under the diaphragm on the left side adjacent to the 10th rib.

This is a delicate organ, and its shape conforms to the surrounding organs of the kidney, pancreas, stomach and large intestine.

The spleen is allied to the circulatory system and responsible for the collection and return of the body's interstitial fluid to the bloodstream.

Although the storage function of red blood corpuscles in the spleen is generally viewed as minimal it is an important blood source during haemorrhage.

It receives a rich blood supply from the splenic artery.

Like the kidneys the spleen can filter blood. By this process bacteria, viruses, worn-out blood cells and platelets are removed by phagocytosis.

During the break down of worn-out red blood cells the haem portion of the haemoglobin corpuscle molecule is converted into bilirubin.

Bilirubin is conducted by the liver via the hepatic portal vein and incorporated into the manufacture of bile. It is largely responsible for the bile's yellowish colouration. An accumulation of bilirubin in the blood creates jaundice an indicator of liver or gall bladder disease.

The spleen is the largest organ of the lymphatic system and the biggest mass of lymphatic tissue in the body.

In its lymphatic capacity, it very active in the immune response to the presence of antigens (microorganisms). It is ready to create lymphocytes and monocytes, the cells which produce antibodies, to be circulated where required around the body.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) the entire digestive process from appetite to elimination is under the control of the spleen.

The spleen is the source of all our ki derived from food and as such becomes the basis for blood production. It is in the small intestine that nutrients are directly absorbed into the bloodstream.

Loose stools with undigested food, reveals that the spleen lacks the energy (deficiency) to process ingested food.

Conversely, constipation, common in the West due to a sedentary lifestyle and mental overwork, can also indicate spleen deficiency.

The spleen connected to the element of earth, supports us like the earth and through digestion provides the flesh of the body.

The spleen energy holds humans up with its rising body ki or qi.

The spleen meridian starts at the bottom of the body in the medial corner of the large toenail on each side. Continuing along the medial lines, it travels through the instep, over the medial malleolus to ascend the inner surface of each leg, in the groove posterior to the tibia. It moves along the inside edge of each kneecap (patella) then up the medial edge of the rectus femoris. At the groin on each side, it follows the outside border of the rectus abdominis to ascend either side of the ribcage both diagonally and laterally, until it ascends laterally, either side of the breast to the 2nd intercostal space. From here on either side, it briefly descends to its last point halfway down each side of the ribcage. The meridian has an extension into the arms to end on the inside of the ulnar edge of each index finger. Additionally, there is an extension following the lateral front sides of the neck and face.

SP6 acupressure point is located four fingers' width directly above the tip of the inner ankle bone (medial malleolus), in the groove posterior to the tibia. It is called 'Three Yin Meeting' and is where the three yin meridians of the kidney, liver and spleen meet. It is responsible for promoting sleep and nourishing both the blood and the body's yin. DO NOT USE in pregnancy.

The penetrating vessel passes through the whole body from head to toes. It emerges between the kidneys flowing through the reproductive organs to the perineum. Here it splits into three main branches, one following the governing vessel, another either side of the conception vessel while fanning across the chest and the other travelling down each leg. Known as the Sea of Blood or the Bonding Vessel it reflects our ability to nourish, form nurturing relationships and to find our place/roots on earth.