

# Stomach Patterns

DSY class 7

- The main Stomach function is "rotting and ripening" food; all Stomach patterns involve some digestive symptoms. In disease, the Stomach is often affected by stagnation of Qi or retention of food.
- The Stomach, with the Spleen, is the Root of the Post-Heaven Qi: this means that it is the source of all the Qi which is produced by the body after birth. If the Stomach is deficient, not enough Qi is produced by the body, and a person will experience tiredness and weakness which are very common Stomach symptoms.
- The Stomach is the origin of fluids as all the drink ingested has to be transformed and digested by it. It follows that the Stomach can be affected by Yin deficiency.

# GENERAL ETIOLOGY

- DIET
- Diet is obviously the main cause of disease for the Stomach. This can be approached from many viewpoints concerning the nature of the food eaten, the regularity of eating times and the conditions of eating.

- a) The nature of food eaten
- Generally speaking, the Stomach prefers foods which are moist and not too dry (the Spleen prefers the opposite, i.e. foods which are dry). If the person eats foods which are too dry (such as baked and broiled foods), the Stomach may become dry and eventually suffer from Yin deficiency.
- Besides this, the Stomach may suffer from excessive consumption of either too hot or too cold foods in terms of energy. Excessive consumption of hot foods may cause Heat in the Stomach. Excessive consumption of cold foods may cause Cold in the Stomach.

- b) The regularity of meal times
- The Chinese traditionally stress the importance of eating at regular times. This is because the body has a natural rhythm of flow of Qi in different organs at different times, and it would be inappropriate to eat at a time when Stomach-Qi is quiescent. The Stomach would obviously not be able to digest food properly. Experience shows that irregular eating does produce Stomach disorders.

- It is therefore important to:
- — have meals at regular times
- — eat a proper breakfast
- — not to over- or under-eat
- — not to nibble
- — not to eat late at night
- — not to eat too fast.

- Over-eating prevents the Stomach from digesting food properly, so that it stagnates in the Middle Burner and Stomach-Qi cannot descend.
- Under-eating or a form of malnourishment due to too strict unsuitable diets leads to Stomach and Spleen deficiency.
- Constant nibbling or eating too fast do not give the Stomach time to digest food properly and lead to retention of food.
- Eating late at night, a time of Yin, forces the Stomach to use its Yin energy and leads to deficiency of Stomach-Yin.

- c) The conditions of eating
- The emotional frame of mind at meal times is important. If one eats while worrying about something (such as one's work), it will lead to stagnation of Qi in the Stomach. If meal time is a regular opportunity for family arguments, even the best of foods will not be digested and will cause retention of food in the Stomach and stagnation of Qi in the Middle Burner.
- Eating on the run, grabbing a quick bite during a short lunch-hour, also causes stagnation of Qi in the Stomach. Reading while eating leads to deficiency of Stomach-Qi.



- EMOTIONS
- The Stomach is mostly affected by worry and excessive thinking. Worry will cause stagnation of Qi in the Stomach and will manifest with a niggling, burning pain, belching and nausea. Excessive mental work over a period of many years leads to deficiency of Stomach-Qi.
- Anger also affects the Stomach, though only indirectly via the Liver. Anger, frustration and resentment cause stagnation of Liver-Qi which invades the Stomach resulting in nausea, belching or distending pain.

- CLIMATE
- The Stomach can be affected by climatic factors directly, in particular by Cold. Cold can invade the Stomach directly (by passing the Exterior layers of the body) and give rise to Interior Cold in the Stomach, with symptoms of sudden acute pain and vomiting.

Deficiency patterns

# STOMACH-QI DEFICIENCY

- Clinical manifestations
- Uncomfortable feeling in the epigastrium, no appetite, lack of taste sensation, loose stools, tiredness especially in the morning, weak limbs.
- Tongue: Pale.
- Pulse: Empty, especially on the right Middle position.
- Key symptoms: tiredness in the morning, uncomfortable feeling in the epigastrium, Empty pulse on the Stomach position.

- Pathology
- The Stomach is the Root of Post-Heaven Qi and the beginning stage in the production of Qi from food: if the Stomach is weak, therefore, Qi will be deficient and all other organs will suffer.
- Tiredness will be the main symptom of Stomach deficiency. It will be worse in the mornings in correspondence with the peak of activity of the Stomach between 7 and 9 am.
- Deficient Stomach-Qi will fail to descend, causing a vaguely uncomfortable feeling in the epigastrium, indicative of a Deficiency condition.

- When Stomach-Qi is deficient, Spleen-Qi is also often deficient as Stomach and Spleen are so closely intertwined. This results in lack of appetite, loose stools, lack of taste and a Pale tongue.
- When Stomach-Qi is weak, it cannot transport the food essences to the limbs, resulting in a feeling of weakness of the limbs.

- Etiology
- 1. The most common cause of Stomach disharmonies is dietary. A diet lacking in nourishment and protein or plain under-eating (due to "dieting") can cause deficiency of Stomach-Qi.
- 2. Stomach-Qi deficiency can also arise as a consequence of a chronic disease which weakens Qi in general. For example, it is very common to see Stomach-Qi deficiency after a prolonged illness such as mononucleosis.

# Treatment

- Principle: tonify Stomach Qi.
- Formula: Si Jun Zi Tang (Four-Gentlemen Decoction)
- Points: ST-36, Ren-12, BL-21, Ren-6.
- Method: reinforcing, moxa is applicable.
- Explanation
- ST-36 is the main point to tonify Stomach-Qi.
- Ren-12 tonifies Stomach and Spleen Qi.
- BL-21 tonifies Stomach-Qi.
- Ren-6 tonifies Qi in general.



# STOMACH DEFICIENT AND COLD

- Clinical manifestations
- Discomfort or dull pain in the epigastrium, better after eating and better with pressure or massage, no appetite, preference for warm drinks and foods, vomiting of clear fluid, no thirst, cold weak limbs, tiredness, pale face.
- Tongue: Pale, wet.
- Pulse: Deep, Weak, Slow, especially on the right Middle position.
- Key symptoms: discomfort in the epigastrium which is better after eating, tiredness, cold limbs.

- Pathology
- This is similar to the previous pattern, with the addition of Empty-Cold. Normally this pattern is associated with Spleen-Yang deficiency which leads to internal Cold.
- Because the discomfort involved is caused by a Deficiency condition, it is better with eating and better for pressure or massage.

- Etiology
- 1. From diet, through insufficient nourishment or protein. It may also be due to excessive consumption of cold foods and drinks, ice-creams, salads, fruit and iced drinks.
- 2. This pattern can be the consequence of a prolonged illness which damages the Yang of the Spleen and Stomach.
- 3. Exterior Cold can invade the Stomach, and if it is not expelled, after some time it will interfere with the Stomach function and cause Stomach-Qi deficiency.

# Treatment

- Principle: tonify and warm Stomach and Spleen Qi.
- Formula: Li Zhong Wan (Regulate the Middle Pill)
- Points: ST-36, Ren-12, BL-20, BL-21, Ren-6.
- Method: reinforcing, moxa should be used.
- Explanation
- ST-36, BL-21 tonify Stomach-Qi.
- Ren-12 tonifies Stomach and Spleen Qi.
- BL-20 tonifies Spleen-Qi.
- Ren-6 tonifies Qi in general. Moxa on ginger can be used on this point: this is best for Empty-Cold in the Stomach.

# STOMACH-YIN DEFICIENCY

- Clinical manifestations
- No appetite or slight hunger with no desire to eat, constipation (dry stools), dull or slightly burning epigastric pain, dry mouth and throat especially in the afternoon, desire to drink in small sips, slight feeling of fullness after eating.
- Tongue: Peeled in the centre, or with coating "without root"
- Pulse: Floating-Empty on the right Middle position.

- \*Empty Heat
- Thirst with desire to drink in small sips, hunger, night sweats, 5 palm heat, bleeding gums, feeling hot in the evening
- Tongue: Red without coating in the center.
- Pulse: Floating-Empty on the right Middle position, slightly rapid.
- Key symptoms: epigastric pain, dry mouth, tongue Peeled in the center or with rootless coating in the center.

- Pathology
- The Stomach is the origin of fluids and when its Yin is deficient there will be dryness, causing dry stools, dry mouth and throat and thirst. The feeling of thirst in Stomach-Yin deficiency is peculiar in so far as there is "thirst but no desire to drink", as Chinese books put it.
- This apparently contradictory statement indicates that there is a thirst (or, rather than thirst, a dry mouth), but because it is not due to Heat, there is no desire to drink large amounts of cold water. Because the thirst is due to deficiency of Yin, the person likes to drink in small sips or sometimes even likes to drink warm liquids.

- The most significant sign of deficiency of Stomach-Yin is a tongue that is either Peeled or has a rootless coating in the center (Stomach area).
- A coating without root looks patchy, as if it had been sprinkled on top of the tongue, rather than arising out of the tongue surface, as the normal coating does. A coating with root cannot be scraped away while a coating without root can.



- Etiology
- The most common cause of Stomach-Yin deficiency is an irregular diet and eating habits, mostly due to eating late at night, skipping meals, "grabbing a quick bite" during a short and hectic lunch-hour, worrying about work while eating, going straight back to work immediately after a meal.
- All these habits seriously deplete Stomach-Qi and, if they persist over a long period of time, they will begin to weaken Stomach- Yin. In particular, eating late at night depletes Stomach-Yin.

# Treatment

- Principle: nourish Stomach-Yin, nourish fluids.
- Formula: Mai Men Dong Tang (Ophiopogonis Decoction)
- Points: Ren-12, ST-36, SP-6, SP-3, ST-44.
- Method: reinforcing, reduce on ST-44.
- Explanation
- Ren-12 tonifies Stomach-Yin.
- ST-36 tonify Stomach-Qi and Stomach-Yin.
- SP-6 tonifies Stomach-Yin and nourishes fluids.
- SP-3 nourishes fluids.
- ST-44 clears Stomach Empty-Heat.

Excess patterns

# STOMACH-FIRE (OR PHLEGM-FIRE)

- Clinical manifestations
- Burning epigastric pain, intense thirst with desire to drink cold liquids, excessive hunger, mental restlessness, swelling and pain in the gums, bleeding gums, sour regurgitation, dry stools, nausea, vomiting soon after eating, bad breath, feeling of heat.
- In case of Phlegm-Fire: feeling of oppression of epigastrium, less thirst, mucus in stools, expectoration of phlegm, mental derangement.

- Tongue: Red center, yellow-dry coating (in case of Phlegm-Fire: yellow-sticky coating).
- Pulse: Rapid Overflowing right middle position (in case of Phlegm-Fire: Slippery, Overflowing, Rapid).
- Key symptoms: burning sensation in epigastrium, thirst with desire to drink cold liquids, thick-yellow coating, Red tongue.

- Pathology
- This is a pattern of Interior Full-Heat in the Stomach. Heat in the Stomach burns the fluids, hence the intense thirst, constipation and dry tongue.
- Heat makes the Blood extravasate in the Stomach channel resulting in bleeding from the gums. The swelling and pain in the gums is due to Heat rising in the Stomach channel.
- Full-Heat obstructs the Stomach and interferes with the descending of Stomach-Qi, hence the sour regurgitation, nausea and vomiting. The fluid regurgitated is "sour" because the Heat ferments the Stomach fluids.

- In case of Phlegm-Fire, Phlegm is more obstructive, causing the feeling of oppression of the epigastrium. There is less thirst because the presence of Phlegm dampens the thirst.
- Phlegm and Fire in the Stomach can affect the Mind and cause insomnia or severe mental symptoms such as manic-depression. This is often reflected in the tongue with a large midline crack not reaching the tip with yellow stiff coating (prickles) inside it.

- Etiology
- This pattern can be due to excessive consumption of hot foods in the sense described above and to smoking (tobacco has a hot energy).
- In case of Phlegm-Fire, it is caused by excessive consumption of hot-greasy foods, such as deep-fried foods.



# Treatment

- Principle: clear Stomach-Heat, stimulate the Stomach descending function.
- Formula: Bai Hu Tang (White Tiger Decoction), Qing Qi Hua Tan Wan (Clear the Qi and Transform Phlegm Pill)
- Points: ST-21, Ren-13, ST-44, ST-45, SP-6, Ren-12, P-6.
- Method: reducing, even method on Ren-12 and Ren-13.
- Explanation
- Ren-12, ST-21 clears Stomach Heat, descends Stomach-Qi.
- Ren-13 subdues rebellious Stomach-Qi.
- ST-44, ST-45 clears Stomach-Heat.
- SP-6 will nourish the fluids and calm the Mind.
- P-6 subdues rebellious Stomach-Qi and calms the Mind.

# COLD INVADING THE STOMACH

- Clinical manifestations
- Sudden pain in the epigastrium, feeling cold, preference for warmth, vomiting of clear fluid, feeling worse after swallowing cold fluids which are quickly vomited, preference for warm liquids.
- Tongue: thick-white coating.
- Pulse: Deep, Slow, Tight.
- Key symptoms: sudden pain in epigastrium, vomiting, feeling cold, Deep-Tight Pulse.

- Pathology
- This is a pattern of Interior Full-Cold. It is an acute pattern caused by the invasion of the Stomach by exterior Cold.
- Exterior Cold blocks the Stomach and prevents Stomach-Qi from descending, hence the vomiting and the pain.
- Cold impairs the Yang of the Stomach and Spleen and prevents the food essences from reaching the body, hence the feeling of cold, Slow pulse, preference for warm liquids, and aggravation from cold liquids.

- Etiology
- This is caused by invasion of the Stomach by exterior Cold, due to exposure to cold and excessive consumption of cold foods and iced drinks.

# Treatment

- Principle: expel Cold, warm the Stomach, stimulate the descending of Stomach-Qi.
- Formula: Galangal and Cyperus Pill (liang fu wan)
- Points: ST-21, SP-4, Ren-13, ST-34.
- Method: reducing method, moxa can be used.
- Explanation
- ST-21 expels Stomach-Cold.
- SP-4 expels Stomach-Cold, descends Stomach-Qi.
- Ren-13 stimulates the descending of Stomach- Qi.
- ST-34 clears obstructions from the Stomach, stops pain.

# STOMACH-QI REBELLING UPWARDS

- Clinical manifestations
- Nausea, difficulty swallowing, belching, vomiting, hiccup.
- Tongue: no changes.
- Pulse: Tight or Wiry on right Middle position.

- Pathology
- This pattern is an expression of the impairment of the Stomach descending function. It is frequently not a pattern appearing on its own, but accompanying other patterns, such as Stomach-Fire or Cold invading the Stomach.
- All the symptoms are caused by the failure of Stomach-Qi to descend and rebelling upwards instead.
- Etiology
- Emotional problems and irregular eating habits.

# Treatment

- Treatment
- Principle: subdue rebellious Qi, restore descending of Stomach-Qi.
- Inula and Hematite Decoction (xuan fu dai zhe tang)
- Points: Ren-13, Ren-10, P-6, SP-4.
- Method: reducing.
- Explanation
- Ren-13 subdues rebellious Stomach-Qi.
- Ren-10 restores the descending of Stomach- Qi.
- P-6 and SP-4 restores the descending of Stomach-Qi.



# DAMP-HEAT IN THE STOMACH

- Clinical manifestations
- Fullness and pain of the epigastrium, feeling of heaviness, facial pain, blocked nose or thick sticky nasal discharge, thirst without desire to drink, nausea, feeling of heat, yellow complexion, sticky taste.
- Tongue: Red, sticky-yellow coating.
- Pulse: Slippery-Rapid.
- Key symptoms: epigastric fullness, feeling of heaviness, nausea , sticky-yellow coating.

- Pathology
- Dampness blocks the middle jiao and prevents descent of Stomach qi, causing fullness and nausea. Blocked nose is due to Dampness obstructing the Stomach channel; this is a common cause of chronic sinusitis.
- The offensive odor of the stools, the burning sensation of the anus and the scanty dark-yellow urination are indicative of Heat.
- Etiology
- Bad diet and emotional strain.

# Treatment

- Principle: resolve Dampness, clear Heat restore descending of Stomach Qi.
- Formula: Ping Wei San (Calm the Stomach Powder)
- Points: SP-9, L.I.-11, LI-4, ST-34, REN-9, REN-11, REN-12, REN-13, ST-21, ST-25, ST-40, ST-44
- Method: reducing, no moxa.

# RETENTION OF FOOD IN THE STOMACH

- Clinical manifestations
- Fullness, pain and distension of the epigastrium which are relieved by vomiting, nausea, vomiting, foul breath, sour regurgitation, belching, insomnia, loose stools or constipation, poor appetite
- Tongue: thick coating (which could be white or yellow).
- Pulse: Full, Slippery.
- Key symptoms: epigastric fullness, sour regurgitation, thick coating.

- Pathology
- This is an Interior Excess pattern. It could be associated either with Cold or Heat, in which case the tongue coating would be white or yellow respectively.
- Most of the symptoms are caused by the obstruction of food in the Stomach, preventing Stomach-Qi from descending, hence the nausea, vomiting, feeling of fullness, belching and sour regurgitation.

- The foul breath is due to the fermentation of food in the Stomach for too long.
- The prolonged retention of food in the stomach creates an obstruction in the Middle Burner and prevents Heart-Qi from descending. This causes the Mind to be disturbed at night resulting in insomnia.
- The Slippery pulse indicates the presence of undigested food.

- Etiology
- This pattern could be simply due to overeating. It can also be due to eating too quickly, or eating in a hurry or worrying while eating.

# Treatment

- Principle: remove retention of food, restore the descending of Stomach-Qi.
- Formula: Bao He Wan (Preserve Harmony Pill)
- Points: Ren-13, Ren-10, ST-21, ST-44, ST-45, SP-4, P-6.
- Method: reducing.
- Explanation
- Ren-13 subdues rebellious Stomach-Qi.
- Ren-10, ST-21 stimulates the descending of Stomach-Qi and resolves stagnant food.
- ST-44, ST-45 resolves stagnant food and clears Heat.
- SP-4, P-6 stimulates the descending of Stomach-Qi.



# STASIS OF BLOOD IN THE STOMACH

- Clinical manifestations
- Severe stabbing epigastric pain, may be worse at night, dislike of pressure, nausea, vomiting of blood, vomiting of food looking like “coffee grounds”.
- Tongue: Purple.
- Pulse: Wiry.
- Key symptoms: stabbing pain in the epigastrium, vomiting of dark blood.

- Pathology
- Stasis of Blood always causes pain of a stabbing or boring nature, hence the stabbing epigastric pain. This pain is much more intense than in any of the other Stomach patterns.
- Stasis of Blood always manifests with dark colored blood, hence the vomiting of dark blood.
- The Purple tongue reflects the stasis of Blood.

- Etiology
- This is always a chronic condition, resulting from various causes. It may be associated with, or be the result of other Stomach patterns, particularly Stomach-Fire, Retention of Food in the Stomach, and Liver-Qi invading the Stomach. Any of the causes indicated for these patterns can therefore cause stasis of Blood in the Stomach.
- In addition to this, stasis of Blood is often the result of stagnation of Qi, particularly of the Liver, over a long period of time. This is usually due to long-standing emotional problems such as anger, frustration, resentment and depression.

# Treatment

- Principle: remove stasis, restore descending of Stomach-Qi.
- Formula: Shi Xiao San (Sudden Smile Powder)
- Points: Ren-10, ST-21, ST-34, SP-10, BL-17, BL-18.
- Method: reducing, no moxa.
- Explanation
- Ren-10 stimulates the descending of Stomach- Qi.
- ST-21 removes obstructions.
- ST-34 moves Qi and Blood in the channel.
- SP-10, BL-17 removes stasis.
- BL-18 removes stagnation of Liver-Blood.

# STOMACH AND SPLEEN QI DEFICIENCY

- Clinical manifestations
- Poor appetite, slight abdominal distension after eating, tiredness, lassitude, pale complexion, weakness of the limbs, loose stools, discomfort in epigastrium, lack of taste.
- Tongue: Pale.
- Pulse: Empty.
- Key symptoms: Poor appetite, tiredness, epigastric discomfort.

- Pathology & Etiology
- Combination of Stomach-Qi Deficiency and Spleen-Qi Deficiency with the same pathology and etiology.
- GM mentions this combination as being “extremely common” in practice.

# Treatment

- Principle: tonify Stomach and Spleen Qi.
- Formula: Si Jun Zi Tang (Four-Gentlemen Decoction)
- Points: ST-36, Ren-12, SP-3, SP-6, BL-20, BL-21, Ren-6.
- Method: reinforcing, moxa is applicable.
- Explanation
- ST-36, BL-21 tonify Stomach-Qi.
- SP-3, SP-6, BL-20 tonify Spleen Qi.
- Ren-12 tonifies Stomach and Spleen Qi.
- Ren-6 tonifies Qi in general.