

The Bladder in Traditional Chinese Medicine

By Toni Eatros, MS, Dipl Ac, AP

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the bladder is one of the six yang organs, paired with one of the six yin organs. The yin organs store vital substances (such as Qi, blood, yin, and yang), whereas the yang organs are more active and have a function of constantly filling and emptying. The bladder is a perfect example of a yang organ. Its main physiological function is to remove water from the body in the form of urine. To do this, the bladder uses Qi (energy) and heat from its paired yin organ, the kidneys.

Obviously urination is an essential component to the functioning of our bodies, and as such, the bladder plays a vital role through its filling and emptying of urine.

However, the bladder system in TCM has far more influence in the body than just over fluid transformation and excretion. As mentioned above, each yang organ is paired with a yin organ, and the bladder is paired with the kidneys. The kidneys are one of the most important energy systems in TCM, they store some of our deepest levels of energy, being the root of all yin and yang in the body and hold our essence.

The kidneys often exert an effect on the bladder system when there is a weakness, this means that sometimes problems with the kidney energy can be detected and treated sooner by treating the bladder or the bladder channel. An example is low back pain. The kidneys in TCM govern the low back and the knees. The bladder meridian runs down the length of the back in not one but two trajectories on either side of the spine. Most forms of low back pain can be treated with bladder points on the back, as well as bladder points on the backs of the legs.

In acupuncture, one of the most essential aspects of the bladder channel is treating the back. The bladder channel runs from the inner corner of the eye, over the top of the head, down the neck and the back on either side of the spine, through the sacrum and down the back of the leg to the knee. Then the channel travels back up to the top of the back and begins its downward trajectory again, tracing another trail down the length of the back, more lateral than the first.

It then continues down the back of the leg to the outside of the pinky toe. The bladder channels trajectory makes it a powerful channel for treating most kinds of neck, back, sacral, hamstring, calf and achilles pain. It is particularly helpful when there is a pain condition affecting more than one of these sites.

Every energy system in TCM exerts an effect on both the physical body and the mental/emotional self. The kidneys are associated with fear - this means excessive fear will weaken the kidneys, but irrational fear can also be a symptom of a kidney imbalance. As the bladder is linked to the kidneys, it can be used to support the kidneys in treating fear. When the bladder itself is out of balance, there may be negative emotions such as jealousy, suspicion and inability to let go of grudges.



To take care of the bladder:

- Drink plenty of non-caffeinated, non-sugary beverages throughout the day
- Eat a kidney-nourishing diet - dark foods like black beans, black walnuts, and seafood
- Make sure to stretch! Create a daily stretching routine that includes stretches for the whole back of the body.
- Think about including foam rolling, massage, myofascial release, cupping, gua sha or tuina.
- Keep stress levels to a minimum

Regular acupuncture treatments can greatly improve the health of the bladder and kidneys and keep them strong. If you think your Bladder and/or Kidney channel is out of balance, schedule an acupuncture appointment online now, at www.acupuncturesolutionsonline.com. You can also call our office at 239-260-4566. Traditional Chinese Medicine coupled with Western medicine can help anyone suffering from bladder or kidney issues.

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