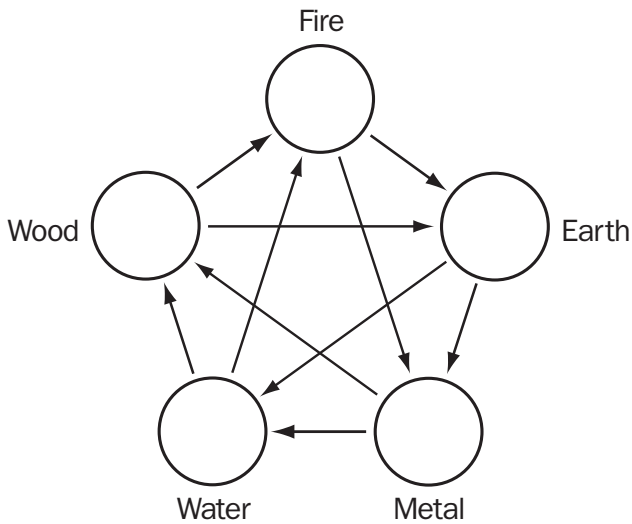


Chapter 6

The Five Elements



In addition to the meridian system and the theory of yin and yang, Chinese medicine has another way of categorizing life, nature and the human body. This system is called the five elements, which also presents all aspects of life in a balanced format. Everything in nature fits into five different categories or elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. **Table 6.1** shows the aspects involved in each of the five elements. “Five elements” is translated from the Chinese word “Wuxing.” “Wu” stands for “five” and “xing” depicts something moving: a phase, transformation or change. The five elements have five dynamic qualities that interact with each other and balance each other out. For example, Feng Shui is the theory that peace and harmony can be created in a space if all five elements are present and in balance. A lot of estheticians use Feng Shui in their facial rooms by adding a plant

Table 6.1**Aspects of the Five Elements**

Element	Aspect
Wood	Germination, wind, growth, harmony and flexibility, spring
Fire	Heat, Flaring upwards, fire, growth, summer
Earth	Growing, transformation, nourishing, dampness, and production, late summer
Metal	Strength, reaping, dryness, autumn
Water	Moisture, cold, descending, storing, winter

or tree (wood element), a fountain (water element), a mirror (metal element), a candle (fire element) and fresh flowers (earth element). The five elements can be applied not only to your home but your body, creating balance and harmony within yourself as well as with nature.

Each of the five elements of the body is associated with an internal yin and yang organ, sense, taste, color, season and emotion. The five

For more information on Seasons, see chapter 7, “Colors and Seasons.”

elements are interconnected and each promotes the next; if one element is out of balance it will disrupt the other element. This imbalance will manifest itself in the individual through different signs and symptoms. It may show up in a certain facial color, sound in the

voice, change in emotional state or disharmony in the functioning of connected organs. **Table 6.2** shows the categorization of phenomena according to the five elements.

Now let’s discuss aspects of each of the five elements in detail.

Wood

The wood element is associated with the liver and gallbladder. When liver function is stagnated, anger is common. When the liver is functioning properly, peace is felt. The color for the liver is green. If the face is tinged blue-green, it probably means there is stagnated blood, because the liver is in charge of the free flow of blood. The

Table 6.2
Five Element Phenomena Categorization

	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Flavors	sour	bitter	sweet	pungent	salty
Zang (yin organs)	liver	heart	spleen	lung	kidney
Fu (yang organs)	gall bladder	small intestine	stomach	large intestine	urinary
Senses	eye	tongue	mouth	nose	ear
Tissue	tendon	vessel	muscle	hair/skin	bone
Directions	east	south	center	west	north
Changes	germinate	grow	transform	reap	store
Color	green	red	yellow	white	black
Emotion	anger, depression, frustration	mania	worry, anxiety	grief	fear

blue-green color often shows up around the eye area, as the wood element manifests around the eyes. To break up stagnation of blood and improve circulation, eat red peppers, tomatoes and beets. To benefit the liver, drink a tea made with beet greens, dandelion and lemon.

The liver is the organ in charge of helping the body break down toxins. If the liver is sluggish or full of toxins like aspirin, medication, alcohol, cigarettes and processed food, it too will try to rid the body of toxins via the skin. When severe acne or chronic congestion occurs, there is usually a problem with elimination through the colon. To combat this, the liver should be detoxified so that toxins can be eliminated and the colon, lung, and liver can work in harmony. Chlorophyll is an excellent drink for detoxifying the liver. Naturopaths say that chlorophyll is very close to our blood content, so by drinking it we are bringing fresh oxygen to the organs and ridding our bodies of toxins. Chlorophyll by nature is very cold so people who always suffer from cold hands and feet should not take it because it will make them colder.