



Traditional Chinese Medicine Diagnosis

“Tongue Diagnosis”

Colorado School of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Sources for Tongue Diagnosis

Power Point Presentation

- ❖ The Foundations of Chinese Medicine, 2nd Edition, Maciocia
 - ❖ Diagnosis in Chinese Medicine, Maciocia
 - ❖ Tongue Diagnosis in Chinese Medicine, Maciocia
 - ❖ Tongue Photos, Kitchie
- The tongue photos used in this presentation and additional tongue photos are available in the CSTCM Library on photo CDs

Tongue

- ❖ Reliable
- ❖ Clearly visible clues to patient's disharmony
- ❖ Reflects basic and underlying patterns
- ❖ Almost always shows true condition of the patient
- ❖ Tongue body & coating colors relatively unaffected by short-term events or recent changes

Tongue

- ❖ Useful in complicated conditions

 - Contradictory Heat or Cold

 - Contradictory Yin Deficiency or Yang Deficiency

- ❖ Tongue appearance is a useful gauge for monitoring the improvement or decline of the patients condition

 - Tongue body more useful in chronic conditions

 - Tongue coating more useful in acute conditions

Tongue

- ❖ Tongue correspondence of different tongue areas to different Zangfu generally agreed upon
- ❖ Tongue diagnosis is relatively objective in comparison with other techniques
- ❖ Relatively easy to learn

Conditions for Examining the Tongue

❖ Lighting

Natural Lighting best

Artificial Light – halogen bulb

❖ Observation Techniques

Tongue out relaxed & no longer than 15 seconds

Examine tongue systematically

Tongue Shen - Tongue-body color

Tongue-body shape & movement

Tongue Coating

Tongue Moisture

Tongue Diagnosis

- ❖ Both tongue photos are of the same patient a few seconds apart
- ❖ The patient did not relax their tongue in the top photo and relaxed tongue in bottom photo
- ❖ Always be careful of this phenomenon



Conditions for Examining the Tongue

❖ External Factors

Food & Drink

Smoking – yellow coating

Medicines –

antibiotics = small peeled patches

anti-inflammatory = red points

oral corticosteroids = red & swollen

inhaled bronchodilators = red tip

cytotoxic = red with thick dark-
yellow/brown coat

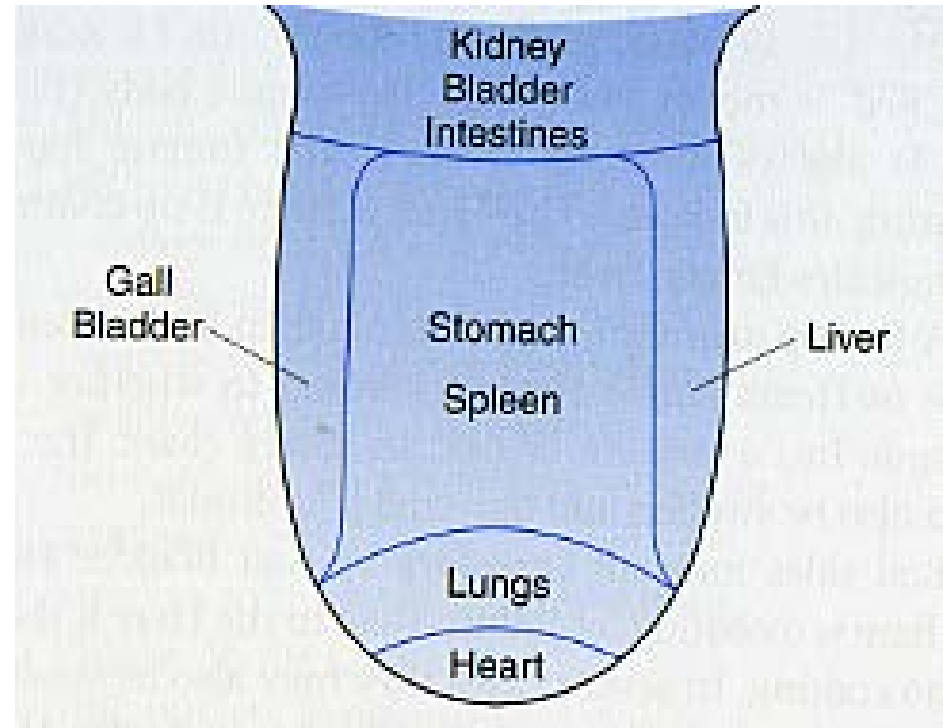
Tongue Areas

❖ Lower Jiao

❖ Middle Jiao

❖ Upper Jiao

❖ * Also, outer portion = Exterior
central portion = Interior



Tongue-Body Color

❖ Tongue Shen

Liveliness – Suppleness – Vitality – Brightness

Root = Kidney Essence

Nothing to do with other pathological signs

❖ Tongue Color

Normal – Pale Reddish

State of Blood & Nutritive Qi & Yin Organs

Heat or Cold

Yin or Yang Deficiency

5/3 Pathological Colors –

Pale, (Red, Deep-red), (Purple, Blue)

Pretty good tongue



Pale Tongue

- ❖ **Qi Deficiency** = only slightly pale
- ❖ **Yang Deficiency** = slightly too wet – normal coat
- ❖ **Blood Deficiency** = dry – normal coat
- ❖ **Severe Blood Deficiency** = pale – no coat
- ❖ **Liver Blood Deficiency** =
Pale sides of tongue – normal coat
- ❖ **Severe Liver Blood Deficiency** =
Pale orangey sides of tongue – normal coat or no coat
- ❖ **Spleen–Blood Deficiency** =
pale on sides of central section

Pale Tongue

❖ **Pale Wet Tongue =**

Spleen Yang Deficiency failing to T&T fluids

Kidney Yang Deficiency (would also be swollen)

❖ **Pale Dry Tongue =**

Blood Deficiency

Yang Deficiency – according to accompanying symptoms (ST or LU)

❖ **Pale, Bright, Shiny Tongue =**

No coat (looks like freshly plucked chicken skin)

Chronic Stomach & Spleen Qi Deficiency as well as Qi & Blood Deficiency

Pale, slightly dry Tongue



Pale Tongue



Pale Tongue



Pale Tongue



Slightly Pale Tongue



Slightly Pale Tongue



Red Tongue

- ❖ **Heat** --- **With coat** = Full Heat --- **No coat** = Empty Heat
- ❖ **Entire Tongue Red** = Ying or Blood Level Heat
- ❖ **Entire Tongue Red or Dark Red with Redder Tip** = Ying or Blood Level Heat & Heart Fire
- ❖ **Red & Wet** = Ying Level Heat & Retention of Damp or Deficiency Yang Qi with False Yang Floating Up
(True Cold False Heat)
- ❖ **Red & slightly Moist** = Heat hasn't dried up fluids yet

Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red & Dry with Coat** = Interior Excess Heat
- ❖ **Red & Dry with No Coat** = Yin Deficiency
with Exhaustion of Body Fluids
- ❖ **Red & Bright Shiny (like a mirror)** =
Yin Deficiency with Body Fluid Deficiency
 - with Dry Root** = Kidney Yin Deficiency
 - with Dry Center** = Stomach Yin Deficiency
- ❖ **Red & Scarlet (bright & shiny tending to pink)** = Lung (front) or Heart (tip) Yin Deficiency

Red Tongue

❖ Red with Moist Coat



❖ Red with Dry Scanty Coat



Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red Tip with Coat** = Heart Fire – Wei Level Heat
- ❖ **Red Tip No Coat** = Heart Empty Heat
- ❖ **Red Tip & Sides** = Wei or Qi Level Heat
- ❖ **Red Tip & Lung Area with thin Yellow Coat** = Wind Heat & Lung Heat

Red Tongue

❖ Red Tip



❖ Red Tip & Sides with No Coat



Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red Sides with Coat** = Liver Fire or Gall Bladder Heat
- ❖ **Red Tongue with Redder Sides & possibly slightly Swollen Sides** = Chronic Liver Yang or Liver Fire
- ❖ **Red Sides with No Coat** = Liver Yin Deficiency with Empty Heat
- ❖ **Red between Tip & Center** = Lung Heat

Red Tongue

❖ Slight Red Tongue,
Redder Swollen Sides



❖ Reddish Purple with
Red Peeled Spots on
Sides



Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red Root** = Kidney Heat
- ❖ **Red Tongue with Redder Peeled**
Root = Kidney Yin Deficiency with Empty Heat
- ❖ **Red Center with Coat** = Stomach Heat
- ❖ **Red Center with No Coat** = Stomach
Empty Heat

Red Tongue

❖ Red Center & Root



❖ Purplish with Red Center & Root



Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red Raised Points (*dian*) (smaller than Spots)**
= Blood Heat
- ❖ **Red Tongue with Red Points** = Blood Heat
- ❖ **Red Points in or around Center or Sides** =
Stomach Heat
- ❖ **Red Points on Tip** = Heart Fire
- ❖ **Red Points on Sides/Edges** = Liver Fire or
Ascending Liver Yang
- only on Right Side** = Gall Bladder Heat
- only on Left Side** = Liver Fire

Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red Points in Chest Area** = Lung Heat
- ❖ **Red Points on Root** = Heat in the Lower Burner
 - with Yellow Coat** = Heat in either Urinary Bladder or Intestines
 - with No Coat** = Kidney Reckless Fire due to Kidney Yin Deficiency
 - in women** = also could be Heat in the uterus, fallopian tubes, or ovaries, as in PID

Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red Points In Externally Contracted Diseases**
 - on Tip** = early stage attack of external pathogenic Heat, only affecting Upper Burner & Exterior energetic layers of the body
 - on Sides** = externally-contracted pathogenic Heat (Wind Heat), only affecting Exterior energetic layers of the body
 - on Left or Right of Center** = externally-contracted Wind Heat in intermediate stage (half-Interior – half-Exterior) (Shaoyang Stage)

Red Tongue

❖ **Pale Red Points around central surface =**

(usually on a normal or pale tongue) slight
Stomach Heat with Stomach & Spleen Qi
Deficiency

❖ **White Concave Points**

(commonly around center) = Stomach Cold

Red Points



Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red Spots (*ban*) (larger than Points) = Heat & some Blood Stasis**
- ❖ **Red Spots on Tip = Heart Heat & Blood Stasis**
- ❖ **Red Spots on Sides = Liver Heat & Blood Stasis**
- ❖ **Red Spots on Root = (Damp) Heat & Blood Stasis in the Lower Burner**
- ❖ **Dark Red with Red or Purple Spots or Entire Tongue Red = Ying or Blood Stage Heat**

Red Points & Spots

❖ Red Spots



❖ Red Points & Spots



Red Tongue

❖ Red with Prickles

(papillae bigger than normal & raised, like thorns) = Heat in the Ying Level, either in the Upper Burner (Lung area or across center or around center) or Middle Burner (Stomach area in center, often with wide center crack with yellow prickles inside crack)

Red Prickles



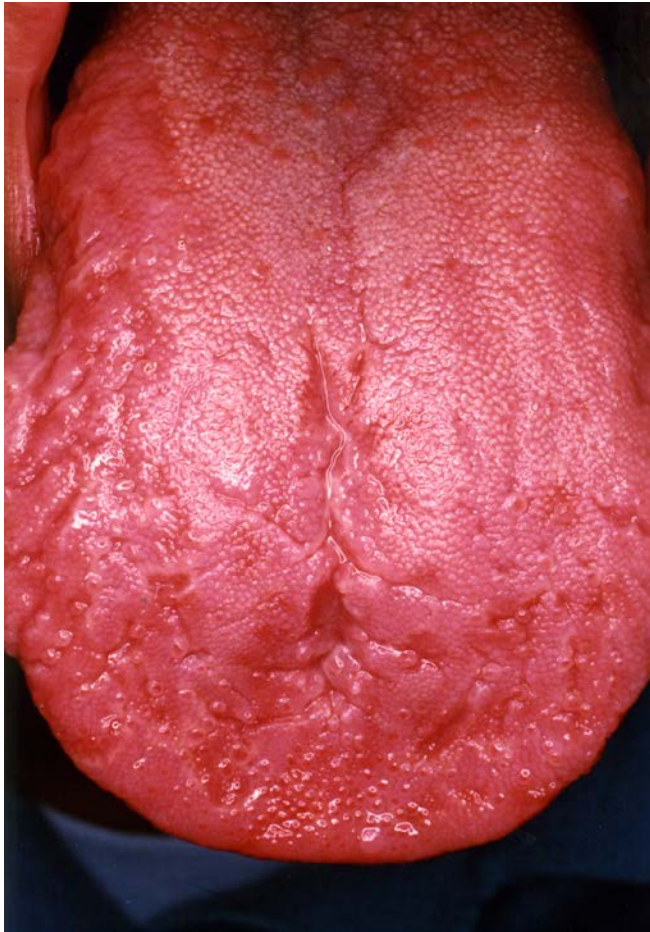
Red Prickles



Red Prickles



Red Points, Spots, Prickles



Red Points, Spots, Prickles



Red Tongue

- ❖ **Red with Purple Spot in Center =**
Stomach Heat & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Red & Peeled =** Chronic Kidney & Stomach
Yin Deficient Heat
- ❖ **Dark/Deep Red Tongue =** more serious or
advanced stage of Heat
- ❖ **Dark Red & Dry Center with Coat =** Ying or
Blood Level Heat – Stomach Fire
no Coat = Kidney & Stomach Yin Deficiency Heat

Red Tongue

❖ Dark Red – No Coat



❖ Dark Red –
Scanty Coat



Purple - Blue Tongue

- ❖ **Purple** = Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Purple Sides** = Chronic Liver Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Purple Center** = Chronic Stomach Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Purple Chest Area Sides** = Chronic Heart or Lung Blood Stasis – In women, breast lumps or breast pathology
- ❖ **Purple Front Third** = Lung Blood Stasis

Purple - Blue Tongue

- ❖ **Reddish-Purple (usually dry)** = Chronic Heat & Blood Stasis – Heat in the Ying & Blood Level with consumption of body fluid – If whole tongue purple indicates extreme Heat in the Zangfu
- ❖ **Reddish Purple, Dry, Cracked** = Chronic extreme Heat that is difficult to treat
- ❖ **Reddish-Purple Tip** = Chronic Heart Blood Stasis with Heat
- ❖ **Reddish-Purple Sides** = Chronic Liver Heat & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Dark Reddish-Purple** = Chronic Extreme Heat with Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Dark Reddish-Purple & Dry** = Heat in the Blood & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Dark Reddish-Purple & Wet** = Ying Level Heat & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Reddish-Purple & Distended** = Chronic Liver and/or Heart Heat & Blood Stasis

Purple - Blue Tongue

❖ Slight Reddish-Purple



❖ Slight Purple



Purple - Blue Tongue

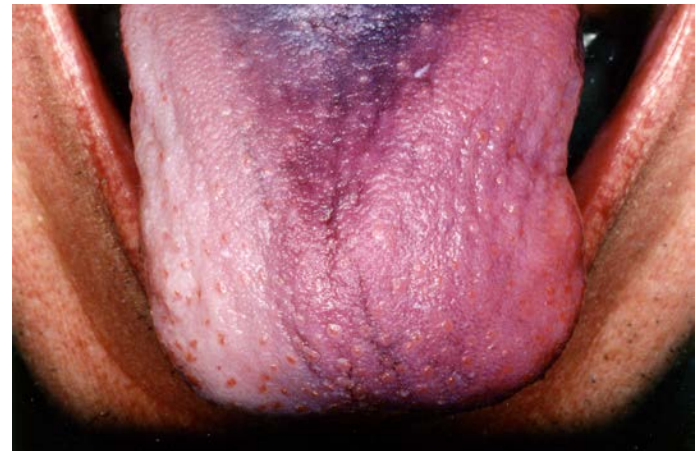
- ❖ **Bluish-Purple** = Chronic Internal Cold & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Bluish-Purple Tip** = Chronic Heart Blood Stasis & Cold
- ❖ **Bluish-Purple Center** = Chronic Spleen Cold & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Bluish-Purple Root** = Chronic Kidney Cold & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Bluish-Purple Sides in Women** = Chronic Uterine Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Bluish-Purple & Moist** = Cold from Deficiency of Yang Leading to Blood Stasis – Cold in the Liver & Kidneys Leading to Stiffening of the Sinews & Bones

Purple - Blue Tongue

❖ Bluish-Purple



❖ Reddish Purple Center & Root



Purple - Blue Tongue

- ❖ **Blue** = Chronic Interior Cold (Extreme Yang Deficiency) & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Blue with No Coat** = Cold & Blood Stasis with Total Collapse of Qi & Blood
- ❖ **Blue Center, Slippery & Greasy** = Spleen & Stomach Cold due to Extreme Spleen & Stomach Yang Deficiency
- ❖ **Blue Tongue During Pregnancy** = Danger of miscarriage

Sublingual Veins

- ❖ **Protrude tongue without too much force**
- ❖ **Ask patient to curl tongue upward & touch tip on palate – (demonstrate)**
- ❖ **Should be barely visible - Pale-red color**
- ❖ **Clearly visible veins = pathological**
- ❖ **Early indicator of Blood Stasis before rest of tongue body becomes purple**
- ❖ **Distended, Not Dark = Qi Deficiency & Stagnation**

Sublingual Veins

- ❖ **Dark** = Blood Stasis – Darker the color the more severe the Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Dark without purple tongue** = Blood Stasis short duration
- ❖ **Too Thin** = Yin Deficiency
- ❖ **Dark & Dry** = Severe Yin Deficiency with Empty Heat
- ❖ **Dark, Swollen & Wet** = Lung, Spleen, Kidney Deficiency with Accumulation of Fluids
- ❖ **Distended & Dark Purple** = Upper Burner Blood Stasis - Lung, Heart, or Liver Blood Stasis

Sublingual Veins

❖ In Chronic Painful Obstruction (Bi) Syndrome

Reddish & Shiny = Damp Heat

Yellowish = Dampness

White & Slippery – Cold Damp

Swollen, White & Sticky = Dampness & Blood Stasis

❖ Modern Chinese Research

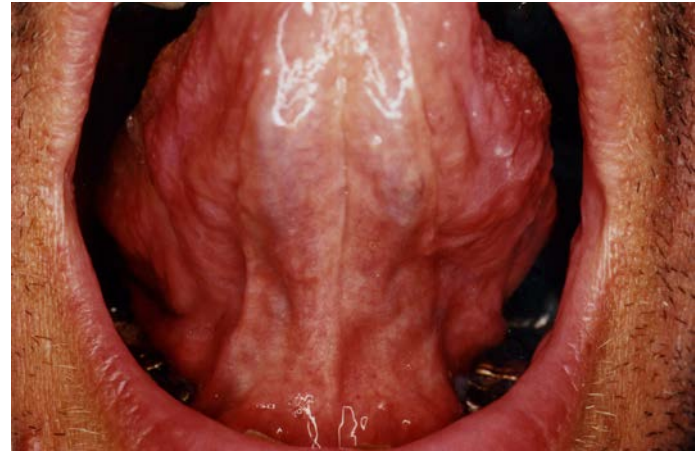
Dark Purple = Hardening of brain arteries

Distended, Dark & Crooked = Hardening of the arteries,
hypertension

Small Nodules like rice or wheat grain = Hardening of
arteries & heart disease

Sublingual Veins

❖ Normal



❖ Normal



Sublingual Veins

❖ Normal



❖ Normal Color –
Distended



Sublingual Veins

❖ Slight Distended –
Slight Dark



❖ Slight Distended –
Slight Dark



Sublingual Veins

❖ Slight Distended –
Slight Dark



❖ Not Distended –
Slight Dark



Sublingual Veins

❖ Slight Dark & Distended

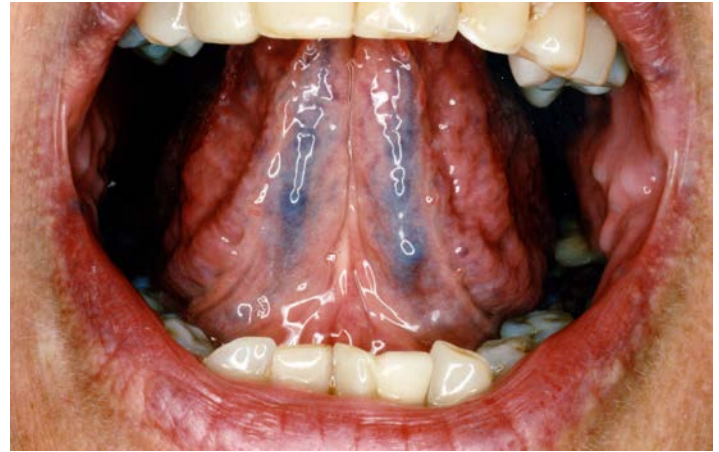


❖ Slight Dark & Thin



Sublingual Veins

❖ Dark & Distended



❖ Dark & Distended



Sublingual Veins

❖ Dark & Distended



❖ Dark & Distended

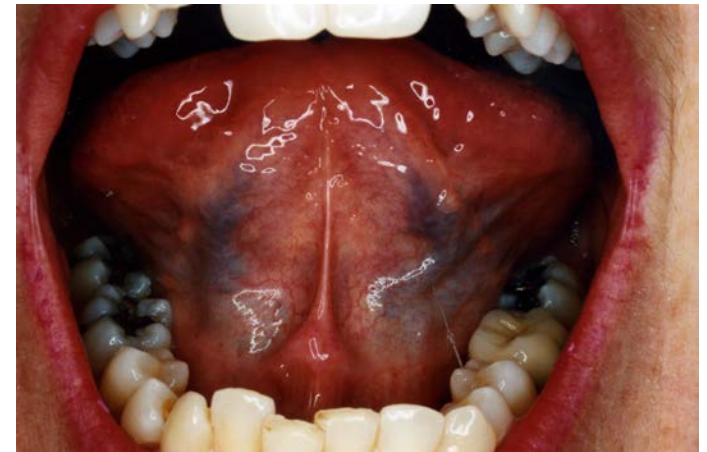


Sublingual Veins

❖ Dark & Distended



❖ Dark & Distended



Tongue Body Color Summary

- ❖ **Pale** = Blood Deficiency (slight dry)
Yang Deficiency (wet)
- ❖ **Pale, Bright & Shiny** =
Qi & Blood Deficiency (ST – SP)
- ❖ **Red** = Ying or Blood Level Heat (with/without coat)
Yin Deficiency with Empty Heat (no coat)
- ❖ **Red & Wet** = Heat with Retention of Damp
- ❖ **Red & Dry** =
Excess Heat Burning Body Fluids (with coat)
Yin Deficient Heat with Exhaustion of Body Fluids (no coat)

Tongue Body Color Summary

- ❖ **Red & Shiny** = Stomach and/or Kidney Yin Deficiency
- ❖ **Red & Scarlet** = Lung or Heart Yin Deficiency
- ❖ **Red with Red Points or Spots** = Heat with Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Red with Prickles** = Ying Level Heat or Heat in the Upper or middle Burner
- ❖ **Red with Purple Spot in Center** = Blood Stasis & Stomach Heat
- ❖ **Red & Peeled** = Stomach & Kidney Yin Deficiency Heat

Tongue Body Color Summary

- ❖ **Dark Red with Dry Center** = Stomach Fire or Stomach Yin Deficiency Heat
- ❖ **Reddish Purple** = Heat & Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Reddish Purple & Distended** = Extreme Heat with Blood Stasis & Poison from Alcohol Injuring Heart
- ❖ **Bluish Purple** = Blood Stasis from Internal Cold
- ❖ **Bluish Purple & Moist** = Blood Stasis from Internal Cold Stiffening Tendons & Bones

Tongue Body Color Summary

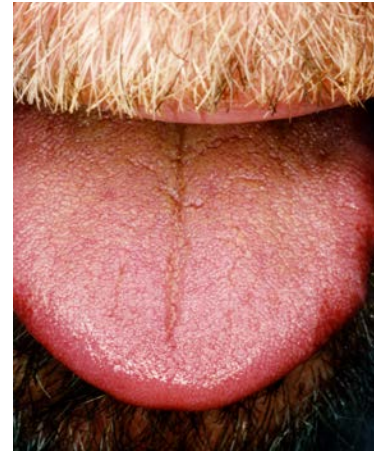
- ❖ **Blue** = Severe Internal Cold with Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Blue, No Coat** = Severe Internal Colds with Stasis & Exhaustion of Blood
- ❖ **Blue Center** = Spleen Yang Deficiency with Retention of Phlegm in Chest
- ❖ **Blue in Pregnant Woman** = Danger of Imminent Miscarriage
- ❖ **Distended Sublingual Veins** = Deficiency & Qi Stagnation or Blood Stasis if Dark

Tongue Body Shape

- ❖ Indication of Blood - Ying Qi – State of Zangfu
 - ❖ Reflects Full or Empty Character of Patient's Condition
 - ❖ Indication of Severity & Duration of Condition
 - ❖ Always consider tongue body shape & color together
 - ❖ **Thin** (thickness) = Blood Deficiency if Pale
Yin Deficiency if Red with No Coat
 - ❖ **Swollen** (relative to size of person) = Retention of Damp or Phlegm
– Heat
- Normal Color, Swollen** = Retention of Damp Heat in Stomach & Spleen – Deficiency of Spleen Qi T&T with Heat
- Pale, Wet, Swollen** = Spleen & Kidney Yang Deficiency Leading to Retention of Damp

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Thin



❖ Thin



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Normal Color - Swollen



❖ Swollen



Tongue Body Shape

- ❖ **Fresh-looking Red, Swollen** = Stomach & Heart Heat
- ❖ **Purple, Swollen** = Retention of Damp Heat seen in alcoholism
- ❖ **Dark Bluish Purple, Swollen** = Poisoning causing Blood Stasis
- ❖ **Partial Swelling** = Qi Deficiency leading to Accumulation of Fluids
- Heat

Swollen Edges in Center or Front 2/3 (usually Pale or Normal) = Chronic Spleen Qi or Yang Deficiency

Swollen Sides all around (usually Red or Purple) =
Liver Yang Ascending or Liver Fire

Swollen Tip on Normal Color Tongue = Heart Qi Deficiency

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Swollen Sides



❖ Swollen Left Side & Right Front Half



Tongue Body Shape

Swollen Red Tip on Red or Dark Red Tongue =
Heart Fire

Swollen Front Third = Lung Qi Deficiency with
Retention of Phlegm in the Lungs

Swollen Sides in Chest/Breast Area = Retention
of Phlegm in chest/breast area or Lung Qi Deficiency

Swollen along Center Crack

Red tongue = Heart Fire

Normal tongue = Heart Qi Deficiency

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Swollen Front Third



❖ Swollen Center with Lung Area Depression



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Swollen Rear Two-Thirds



❖ Swollen Back Third



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Swollen Center & Back
Two-Thirds



❖ Swollen Along Center
Crack



Tongue Body Shape

Swollen One Longitudinal Half (pushes midline away from center) = Deficiency of Qi & Blood in the Channels of the swollen side

Partial Swelling in a Specific Area = Deficiency of Qi in normal color tongue or Stagnation of Qi in red tongue, in Corresponding Area

Swollen on One Longitudinal Half of Tongue Surface (half bulges upward) = Lung Qi Deficiency of corresponding side

Hammer-Shaped (regular size root, swollen front third) = Serious condition – Serious Spleen Stomach Qi Deficiency

Tongue Body Shape

- ❖ Swollen More on One Longitudinal Half



- ❖ Swollen One Longitudinal Half



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Partial Swelling in Specific Area



❖ Partial Swelling in Specific Area



Tongue Body Shape

❖ **Stiff (Looks Hard)** = Interior Wind or Blood Stasis or Severe Yin Deficiency

In course of acute disease = Invasion of Pericardium by Heat

In course of chronic condition (dry & red or dark red) = Intense Heat injured Body Fluids leading to malnourishment of sinews, muscles, channels

Red, Redder Tip, Not Dry = Blazing Heart Fire

Pale or Normal = Internal Wind

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Stiff



❖ Stiff



Tongue Body Shape

- ❖ **Flaccid (flabby or crumpled)** = Deficiency of Body Fluids or Blood
- Pale** = Heart & Spleen Qi Deficiency with Blood Deficiency
- Red** = Intense Heat Injured Body Fluids
 - with coat** = Excess Heat
- Deep Red, Flaccid, Very Dry** = Extreme Kidney Yin Deficiency leading to severe depletion of Body Fluids

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Flaccid



❖ Flaccid



Tongue Body Shape

❖ **Long** (narrow & usually red) = Tendency to Heat, especially Heart Heat

Red, Tip Swollen & redder = Heart Phlegm & Fire

❖ **Short** = Severe Interior Cold Stiffens & Contracts muscles & Sinews or Body Fluids Depleted

Pale = Spleen or Kidney Qi & Yang Deficiency leading to Internal Cold

Red = Extreme Internal Heat Stirs-up Liver Wind

Deep Red & Dry = Extreme Heat Injured Body Fluids

Swollen = Retention of Damp Phlegm in the sinews & muscles, associated with Spleen or Lung Yang Deficiency

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Long



❖ Long



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Short



❖ Short



Tongue Body Shape

❖ **Cracks** = Yin and/or Body Fluid Deficiency – Blood Deficiency -
Full Heat – Dampness – Deficiency of Original Qi

Long Horizontal Cracks = Yin Deficiency (more serious on
red tongue with no coat)

Short Horizontal Cracks = Yin Deficiency, could be with
Deficient Heat

Short Horizontal or Vertical Cracks = Stomach and/or
Kidney Yin Deficiency

Cracks Resembling Ice Floes = Yin Deficiency from old
age

if Red with No Coat = Advanced stage of Yin Deficiency from
Heat

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Short Horizontal Cracks



❖ Short Horizontal Cracks



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Short Horizontal Cracks



❖ Short Horizontal Crack



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Short Horizontal & Vertical Cracks



❖ Short Vertical Cracks



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Short Vertical Cracks



❖ Ice Flow Cracks



Tongue Body Shape

Short Irregular Cracks = Stomach Yin Deficiency

Short Transverse Cracks on Sides, in Middle

Outer Section of Tongue = Chronic Spleen Qi or
Yin Deficiency

if sides are cracked, wet, slight foamy = Long-standing
Spleen Yang Deficiency

Short Wide Crack Center in Midline

in Normal Tongue = Stomach Qi Deficiency

in Normal color with No Coat = Stomach Yin Deficiency

with Sticky, Yellow, Dry, Rough-looking Coating inside Crack
= Stomach Phlegm Fire

**Shallow Wide Midline Center Area Crack Not Reaching
Tip** = Stomach Yin Deficiency

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Irregular Cracks



❖ Irregular Cracks & Transverse Cracks on Sides



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Irregular, Horizontal, & Vertical Cracks



❖ Irregular, Horizontal, Vertical Cracks & Transverse Cracks on Sides



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Irregular Cracks & Transverse Cracks on Sides



❖ Irregular Cracks



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Short, Shallow, Center,
Midline Crack



❖ Short, Shallow, Center,
Midline Crack



Tongue Body Shape

- ❖ Long, Wide, Center, Midline Crack



- ❖ Long, Wide, Center, Midline Crack



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Long, Wide, Center,
Midline Crack



❖ Long, Wide, Center,
Midline Crack



Tongue Body Shape

Long Midline Crack Reaching Tip =

Tendency to Heart Pattern

Normal Color = Heart Constitutional Weakness

Red with Redder Tip = Heart Constitutional

Weakness with Heart Fire

Red with No Coat = Heat from Deficiency –

Kidney Yin Deficiency forming Heat

(Water Not Controlling Fire)

Short Transverse Cracks in Lung Area = Past Lung

Pathology – Tendency to Lung Yin Deficiency

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Long Midline Crack
Reaching Tip



❖ Long Midline Crack
Reaching Tip



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Short Transverse
Cracks in Lung Area



❖ Short Transverse
Cracks in Lung Area



Tongue Body Shape

Extremely Deep Midline Crack with other Small Cracks Branching from it (usually red with no coat) = Severe Kidney Yin Deficiency with Empty Heat in Kidneys & possibly Heart

Loose (hangs outside mouth & difficult to retract, possibly dripping with saliva)

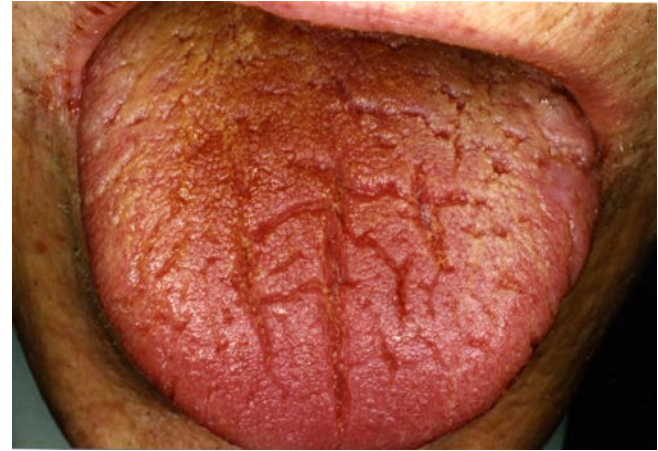
Loose, Stiff, Dry = Liver & Heart Interior Excess
Heat leading to Liver Wind & Heart Fire

Loose, Deep Red, Long = Retention of Phlegm
Fire in the Heart – Unconscious, Delirium

Loose & Numb = Heart Qi Deficiency

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Deep Midline Crack with other Cracks Branching from it



❖ Deep, Center Midline Crack with other Cracks Branching from it



Tongue Body Shape

❖ **Deviated** = Interior (Liver) Wind – External Wind
Invading Channels – Heart Deficiency in Young
Person – Heart Qi or Blood Deficiency

Purplish Red = Liver Wind

Pale = Windstroke

with Facial Paralysis = External Wind Invading Channels

❖ **Numb** = Failure of Ying Qi & Heart Blood to Nourish
Tongue – Liver Wind

**Slippery Coat, Numb Corners of Mouth,
Copious Sputum** = Wind Phlegm

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Slightly Deviated



❖ Slightly Deviated



Tongue Body Shape

- ❖ **Moving** (slow, large amplitude) = Internal
Liver Wind
- if Red, Swollen, Dry Sides** = Spleen
Heat & Heart Fire
- ❖ **Quivering** (rapid, small amplitude) = Qi & Blood
Deficiency - Spleen Qi or Yang Deficiency
- Red & Dry** = Heat Leading to Internal Wind
- Deep Red, Flapping** = Liver Heat Poison
Generating Internal Wind
- Pale, Flaccid** = Collapse of Yang

Tongue Body Shape

- ❖ **Rolled** (tip rolls up & over or down & under) = Heart Heat
 - Rolled under** = Heart Heat from Deficiency
 - Rolled over** = Heart Heat from Excess
- ❖ **Tooth-marked/Scalloped** = Chronic Spleen Qi Deficiency
- ❖ **Ulcerated** (swollen, painful red ulcers with red rims on surface) = Heart Fire Blazing Upwards
 - if ulcers have white edge** = Heart Heat from Kidney Yin Deficiency
 - ulcers underneath tongue** = Extreme Heat in the Spleen & Kidneys exhausting Body Fluids

Tongue Body Shape

❖ Slight Rolled Under



❖ Slight Rolled Over



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Tooth-marked



❖ Tooth-marked



Tongue Body Shape

❖ Tooth-marked



❖ Tooth-marked



Tongue Body Shape

❖ **Sore-Covered** (sores like rice grains scattered on four corners of upper & lower surfaces; may or may not be painful) = Upper Burner Heat – Hot Poison in Heart Channel

Convex Painful Sores = Hot Poison in Heart Blazing upwards

Convex & Painless = Yin Deficiency of Lower Burner with Heat from Deficiency Floating Upward

Tongue Body Shape Summary

- ❖ **Thin** = Blood Deficiency (pale)
Yin Deficiency (red)
- ❖ **Swollen** =
Spleen and/or Kidney Yang Deficiency with Damp
Stomach & Spleen Damp Heat
Heart & Stomach Heat (red)
Alcohol Poison (red)
Poisoning
- ❖ **Swollen Edges** = Spleen Qi Deficiency
- ❖ **Swollen Sides** = Ascendant Liver Yang or Liver Fire

Tongue Body Shape Summary

- ❖ **Swollen Tip** = Heart Fire Blazing (red)
Heart Qi Deficiency (normal)
- ❖ **Swollen between Tip & Center** = Lung Qi Deficiency with Retention of Phlegm
- ❖ **Swollen along Central Crack** = Heart Fire Blazing (red) – Heart Qi Deficiency (normal)
- ❖ **Half Swollen** = Weakness of Channels
- ❖ **Partially Swollen on Side** = Deficiency or Qi Stagnation in Chest
- ❖ **Half Surface Swollen** = Lung Qi Deficiency
- ❖ **Hammer-shaped** = Stomach, Spleen & Kidney Deficiency

Tongue Body Shape Summary

- ❖ **Stiff** = Exterior Heat Invading Pericardium (red or dark red)
 - Heat Injuring Body Fluids (red)
 - Blazing Heart Fire
 - Internal Wind (normal color)
- ❖ **Flaccid** = Exhausted Qi & Blood (pale)
 - Extreme Heat Injuring Body Fluids (red)
 - Kidney Yin Deficiency with Heat (deep red)
- ❖ **Long** = Blazing Heart Fire – Phlegm Fire in Heart
- ❖ **Short** = Spleen Yang Deficiency with Internal Cold (pale)
 - Heat Stirring Liver Wind (red)
 - Body Fluid Deficiency due to Heat from Excess (red with coat)
 - Heat from Deficiency (red)
 - Spleen Yang Deficiency with Damp & Phlegm (pale, slippery coat)

Tongue Body Shape Summary

- ❖ **Cracked** - Horizontal = Yin Deficiency
 - Like Ice Floes = Old Age Yin Deficiency
 - Irregular = Stomach Yin Deficiency
 - Transverse on Sides = Spleen Qi Deficiency
 - Vertical in Center = Heart Yin Deficiency or Blazing Heart Fire
 - Transverse behind Tip = Lung Yin Deficiency
 - Deep Center with small cracks = Kidney Yin Deficiency with Heat
- ❖ **Loose** = Interior Excess Heat (red)
 - Phlegm Fire Clouding Heart (red, slippery coat)
 - Heart Qi Deficiency (pale)

Tongue Body Shape Summary

- ❖ **Deviated** = Exterior Wind Invading Channels (normal color)
 - Interior Liver Wind (red or normal)
 - Heart Qi Deficiency (pale)
- ❖ **Numb** = Heart Blood Deficiency (pale)
 - Liver Wind (normal or red)
 - Wind Phlegm (slippery coat)
- ❖ **Moving** = Heart Fire & Internal Wind (red)
 - Spleen Heat with Exhaustion of Body Fluids (red & dry)
- ❖ **Quivering** = Spleen Qi Deficiency (pale)
 - Extreme Heat Generating Internal Wind (red)
 - Collapse of Heart & Spleen Qi (pale)
 - Collapse of Yang (pale & thin)

Tongue Body Shape Summary

- ❖ **Rolled** = Excess Heart Heat (tip rolled under)
Deficient Heart Heat (tip rolled over)
- ❖ **Tooth-marked** = Spleen Qi Deficiency
- ❖ **Ulcerated** = Blazing Heart Fire (red)
Heart Heat from Kidney Yin Deficiency (red & peeled)
Spleen & Kidney Heat (red)
- ❖ **Sore-covered** = Hot Poison in Heart Channel (red)
Heat from Deficiency (red & peeled)

Tongue Coating (Fur/Moss)

- ❖ Coating consists of papillae – Coating is a By-product of Stomach's digestion of food & fluids
- ❖ Reflects state of Yang Organs, particularly Stomach
- ❖ Reflects Heat or Cold & Excess or Deficiency
- ❖ Indicates presence or absence of a Pathogenic Factor
(thicker the coat, stronger the pathogenic factor)
- ❖ Coating Changes Rapidly in Acute Conditions
- ❖ Coating (or lack of) distribution area must be considered
- ❖ **Normal** = Thin White Coat with Root, slightly Moist (thin enough to see body color through it & naturally thickest at the root & coating does not extend to tip or edges)
- ❖ **Coat without Root** (coat looks added instead of growing out of tongue – will eventually come off & be peeled)

Tongue Coating

Thin Coat = Stomach Qi Deficiency

Thick Coat = Strong Pathogenic Factor, Stomach Qi Weakened

❖ **Partial Absence of Coat** = Stomach Yin Deficiency

❖ **No Coat** = Stomach and/or Kidney Yin Deficiency

❖ **Red Tongue with No Coat** = Stomach & Kidney Yin
Deficiency with Empty Heat

❖ **Thick Coat** = signifies presence & strength of Pathogenic
Factor

in Center = Pathogenic Factor in Stomach

on Root = Pathogenic Factor in Bladder or Intestines

Tongue Coating

- ❖ Normal Thin White Moist Coat with Root



- ❖ Thick, Slightly Yellow Coat without Root



Tongue Coating

❖ Deep Red Tongue with No Coat



❖ Red Tongue with Scanty Coat



Tongue Coating

❖ Peeled Spot



❖ Peeled Spot



Tongue Coating

❖ Peeled Spots



❖ Peeled Spots



Tongue Coating

❖ Peeled Areas & Spots



❖ Peeled Areas



Tongue Coating

❖ Thick Coat



❖ Thick Coat



Tongue Coating

❖ Thick Coat



❖ Slight Thick Coat



Tongue Coating

❖ Slight Thick Coat
Center & Root



❖ Thick Coat on Root



Tongue Coating

bilateral or unilateral coat that comes forward in 1 or 2 strips on edges = Pathogenic Factor in Gall Bladder

Coat only on left side = Liver pattern

**Coat only on right side = Shaoyang Syndrome or
Gall Bladder Pattern**

- ❖ **White Coat** (thicker than normal) = Exterior or Interior Cold
- ❖ **Yellow Coat** = Excess Heat
- ❖ **Gray or Black Coat** = Chronic Extreme Cold (wet) or Heat (dry)
- ❖ **Moisture** – Indicates state of Body Fluids

Tongue Coating

❖ White Coat



❖ White Coat



Tongue Coating

❖ Yellow Coat



❖ Yellow Coat



Tongue Coating

❖ Yellow Coat



❖ Blue-Black Coat Root



Tongue Moisture

Normal = Slightly Moist

Too Wet = Yang Qi Deficiency Not T&T Fluids
with Accumulation of Damp

❖ **Dry** = Full Heat or Yin Deficiency Empty Heat

Excess Heat = yellow coat

Kidney Yin Deficiency = peeled

Stomach Yin Deficiency = Coat without root

**Severe Yang Deficiency with Retention of
Damp** = dry

Tongue Moisture

❖ Normal Moisture



❖ Slight Too Wet



Tongue Moisture

❖ Slight Dry



❖ Dry



Tongue Coating

- ❖ **Sticky/Greasy Coat** (oily but coarse appearance & individual papillae can still be seen) = Retention of Damp or Phlegm, especially Phlegm
- ❖ **Slippery Coat** (greasy look, individual papillae cannot be distinguished) = Retention of Damp or Phlegm, predominantly Damp
- ❖ **Moldy Coat** (thick, patchy, crumbly, like tofu or cottage cheese, white or yellow greasy without root) = Damp or Phlegm against a background of Stomach Yin Deficiency with Empty Heat

Tongue Coating

❖ Sticky/Greasy



❖ Slippery



Tongue Coating

❖ Moldy Center & Root



❖ Moldy Root



Tongue Coating

❖ Coating in Externally Contracted Diseases -

Thickness reflects intensity of Pathogenic Factor & its progression towards the Interior

White = early stage Wind Cold

Yellow = change from Cold to Heat (Wind Heat) & penetration of Pathogenic Factor into Interior

Tongue Coating

Coating more concentrated in the front & sides =
early stage

Coating front & sides extending towards center =
Pathogenic Factor penetrating into Interior

Summer Heat = thin dry yellow coat

External Cold Attacking Interior = thick, white,
possibly wet

External Damp Attacking Interior = thick,
greasy, slippery

Tongue Coating & Eight Principles

- ❖ **Exterior** = Normal or More concentrated in either front third or edges
- ❖ **Interior** = Thicker center coat
- ❖ **Deficiency** = Absence or insufficiency of coat or coat without root (Stomach Qi Deficiency)
 - Red Tongue with No Coat** = Stomach & Kidney Yin Deficiency
 - Pale Tongue with No Coat** = Blood Deficiency
 - Normal Color with No Coat** = Stomach Yin Deficiency

Tongue Coating & Eight Principles

- ❖ **Excess** = thick coat
- ❖ **Heat** = yellow coat
- ❖ **Cold** = white coat
- ❖ **Yang (Deficiency) with Accumulation of Damp**
= thick, white, slippery coat
- ❖ **Yin (Deficiency) = no coat**
No coat, normal tongue color = Stomach Yin
Deficiency
No coat, red or deep red color = Kidney Yin
Deficiency

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Externally Contracted Diseases

External attack often produces no change

Wind Cold = normal color, thin white coat, slightly
too moist

Wind Heat = possible slight red or red front or
sides

initial stage is thin white or yellow coat &
slightly dry

later stage is thin yellow coat

severe cases could be gray or black coat

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Interior

Movement from Exterior to Interior may be reflected with tongue changes moving from the front to back

Heat = yellow coat

Cold = white coat

Chronic = yellow coat

White coat on edges & yellow in center = pathogenic factor penetrated to interior & turned to Heat

Yellow coat on edges & white in center = pathogenic factor losing strength & condition improving

No coat = Stomach & Kidney Yin Deficiency

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Half-Interior – Half-Exterior

White tongue-coat, slightly slippery, on one side
of tongue

Red tongue body with white coat on tip

White coat on tip with black on root

White coat on tip with gray coat on root

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Cold

Pale tongue body

White, overly moist coat

Deficiency Cold = Pale, thin white coat slight wet

Severe chronic Yang Deficiency = dry

Excess Cold = Pale, thick white coat slightly too moist,
possible slippery

Chronic Retention of Cold = Blue

Chronic Retention of Cold with Blood Stasis = Purple-
blue

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Heat

Tongue-body red or dark-red

Excess Heat = yellow coat with root, dry

Deficiency Heat = no coat or scanty rootless, dry

Heart Heat = red tip with red points, dry

Liver Heat = red sides, bilateral yellow coat, dry

Stomach Heat = thick yellow coat, red points around center, dry

Lung Heat = thin yellow coat on front, dry

Extreme Heat = brown, gray, or black coat

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

Qi Level Heat = red tongue, yellow, dark-yellow coat; with fire possibly a brown or black coat

Ying Level Heat = red, dry, no coat

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Deficiency

Qi Deficiency = normal (mild Qi Deficiency), slight pale (chronic Qi Deficiency), or slightly flabby

Lung Qi Deficiency = normal color or slightly pale, slightly flabby, possibly swollen in anterior part between tip and center, possibly thin white slightly moist coat in Lung area indicating Retention of Cold in Lungs from previous Wind Cold not properly treated

Spleen Qi Deficiency = tooth-marks, swelling center sides (if severe), flabby, possibly pale

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Deficiency (continued)

Stomach Qi Deficiency = normal color with thinning/lack of coat in center of tongue, or coat without root

Heart Qi Deficiency = pale, if severe there will also be slightly swollen tip

Yang Deficiency = pale, slight wet, thin white coat

Spleen Yang Deficiency = pale or very pale, possibly slightly swollen (severe), wet white coat, if there is Damp there will be a thick (swollen) tongue

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Deficiency (continued)

Kidney Yang Deficiency = pale, swollen, wet,
white coat

Heart Yang Deficiency = pale, tip slightly
more pale or more moist; with Blood Stasis in
chest there would be a bluish-purple tongue &
purple spots around the central surface, or
Blood Stasis in Heart purple spots on tip

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Deficiency (continued)

Blood Deficiency = pale, slightly dry, thin (if severe)

Spleen Blood Deficiency = pale, dry

Heart Blood Deficiency = tip could be more pale
(rare), pale in chest area

Liver Blood Deficiency = pale, sides paler than rest
of tongue

Yin Deficiency = peeled (no coat), or coat without root,
dry, (with Empty Heat) red or dark red

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Deficiency (continued)

Stomach Yin Deficiency = coating without root & later no coat in center, possible wide crack in center

Kidney Yin Deficiency = red or dark red, dry, peeled (no coat), cracks, deep midline crack reaching tip

Heart Yin Deficiency = red, peeled anterior portion, dry, tip redder & drier than rest of tongue

Lung Yin Deficiency = red, peeled front third, dry, possible 1 or 2 cracks in Lung area

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ Excess

(Possibly stiff)

Interior Excess Cold = pale, thick white coat; severe & persistent Retention of Cold could be blue or bluish-purple

Interior Excess Heat = red or dark red, thick yellow coat

Qi Stasis = normal color

Blood Stasis = purple, dark red or purple spots in area of corresponding Zangfu, swollen & dark sublingual veins

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles

❖ **Excess** (continued)

Internal Wind = stiff, moving, deviated

Damp = swollen, slippery coat

Phlegm = more swollen, rough sticky, greasy
coat

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles Summary

- ❖ **Exterior Conditions** – look for coat in front or around center; thickness indicates strength of external pathogenic factor
- ❖ **Interior Conditions** – look at tongue body, color & shape
- ❖ **Cold Conditions** – look for pale tongue body & white coat
- ❖ **Heat Conditions** – look for red tongue body & yellow coat
- ❖ **Excess Conditions** – look for swollen or stiff tongue & thick coat
- ❖ **Deficiency Conditions** – look for flaccid or thin, pale or red tongue with no coat

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles Summary

❖ Exterior –

Wind Cold = thin white coat

Wind Heat = initial stage, thin white coat,
then yellow

❖ **Interior** = tongue body color & shape altered

❖ **Half-Interior, Half-Exterior** = white coat on
one side only, or white anterior, gray or black
posterior

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles Summary

❖ **Cold** = white coat

Deficiency Cold = pale body

❖ **Hot** = red body, yellow coat

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles Summary

❖ Deficiency –

Qi

Lung Qi = body slightly flaccid, slightly swollen anterior

Spleen Qi = tooth-marked

Stomach Qi = lack of coating in center

Heart Qi = pale body

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles Summary

❖ Deficiency –

Yang = pale body

Spleen Yang = pale body, white coat, wet

Kidney Yang = pale body, swollen, white coat

Heart Yang = pale body, bluish purple if severe

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles Summary

❖ Deficiency –

Blood

Spleen = pale body, slightly dry

Heart = pale body, tip paler

Liver = pale body, sides paler

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles Summary

❖ Deficiency –

Yin

Stomach = no coat in center, dry, wide crack in center

Kidney = red body, no coat, dry, cracks

Heart = red body, no coat anterior, tip redder

Lungs = red body, no coat, cracks anterior

Tongue Diagnosis & 8 Principles Summary

❖ Excess

Exterior = thicker coating

Interior –

Cold = pale body, thick, slippery, white coat

Hot = red body, thick yellow coat

Blood Stasis = purple body

Phlegm = thick, slippery, greasy coat

Tongue Diagnosis Practicum

❖ Describe the tongue

Color

Shape

Coating

Moisture

❖ What is/are the likely pattern(s) of disharmony?



Tongue Diagnosis Practicum

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