

Why can't I get pregnant even though all my tests and my husband's tests come back perfect? Why do I get headaches once a week? Why do I get menstruation cramps and I can't even get up the first two days of my period because I'm in so much pain? Why is my eye twitching all the time? Why am I so fatigued?

These are the common questions I get from patients. Today I'm going to answer why am I sick? According to Chinese medicine, there are only three causes of illnesses and we're going to discuss them all today.

One of the strengths of Chinese medicine is that it always looks for the root cause and there are always at least one or two causes of illnesses according to TCM. In conventional medicine, often we are told it's unknown. We don't know why you can't conceive. It's unexplained infertility. In TCM, there is always a cause.

Does that mean that there's always a cure? No. It means that we can either manage the disorders, support the patients, or sometimes get rid of the problem. Patients feel more in control and empowered when they understand what the root cause is, because they can take advantage of either changing some lifestyle habits, or they can have us and their healthcare practitioner support and manage their disorders so they can live a healthy life.

And then you're like, Clara, there's only three causes of disease. Well, that is really weird. How is that even possible? , I'm going to break each of them down into little sub categories. So let's look at why so we can help our patients feel better, manage their disorders, and help support their entire health.

Welcome to AcuPro,, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I'm your host Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture because after all, acupuncture rocks! Growing up, when I first got my period, it was so painful. The first two days were excruciating, so I would lie down with a hot water bottle on my lower abdominal region and just cry. My mom would say, take an aspirin, take a painkiller, and I would always say, no, I don't want to, I just want this to go away.

Even back then, I wasn't really big on taking medication. I don't know why, it was just natural instinct following my intuition. However, having those two days in pain in bed was not fun at all. And the medical doctor said that I was just one of those that was unlucky. When you have menstruation cramp, you're unlucky.

Other girls don't have that. Well, I don't really believe in luck. Maybe you do. I believe in making my own destiny, and I have believed in that since I was a little girl. So I had to kind of look into other solutions and figure out what could help so I didn't continue to feel so out of control two days every month because I played sports and I enjoyed school and this was so debilitating.

My story starts with some acupuncture for dysmenorrhea. Yes, that's what I had years ago. Now, I don't remember a lot of it. I just remember going, getting some acupuncture, and eventually, my period became a normal, eventless period. Oh! This was fantastic. Now, today I want to talk about why we are sick. What are the root cause?

Because this is a strength of Chinese medicine. As I said in the introduction, we have three causes of disease in TCM. External pathogen, internal emotions, and my favorite one, others. When I learned this in TCM school, I was like, others, what are others?

Well, there's a big subcategory in that basket, and we're going to look at each and every one of them. First is external pathogen. When we talk about external pathogen, we talk about the environment, viruses, and bacteria. So viruses, bacteria, or the environment penetrates the body from the external part into the internal part.

External pathogen, invasion. That's what it means. Now virus and bacteria are going to create fever, the common cold, the flu, they're going That's an external pathogen invasion. It's usually an acute problem. The other one is the environmental factor. If I fall into a frozen lake, I will get hypothermia.

This is invasion of cold and damp because it was water. If I stay too long in the sun and I get a sunburn, now I have invasion of external pathogen heat, which creates inflammation or fever or reaction from my body trying to fight this invasion. Invader. Does that make sense?

So external pathogens are always acute. They are wind, heat or fire, cold, damp, dryness, and summer heat, which happens only in the summer. All those are gonna create symptoms. So in Chinese medicine we don't.

Treat the flu or the cold. We look at the symptoms. If the person is chilly, they want some soup, they're sneezing, they're having a stuffy nose, they're having a bit of a scratchy throat, we're like, huh, this is invasion of wind and cold. Now cold you understand because they're chilly, right? They're feeling cold, they want some soup.

Wind is because wind is a pathogen that moves rapidly, and usually when we have an external pathogen like a bacteria or a virus, everything change really quickly, right? Within 12 hours. If you have wind heat, you may wake up with a sore throat a little bit. You're like, Ooh, I think I'm getting sick. By the end of the day, you have a fever.

You have a really big sore throat and you're like, Oh no, I think I got a flu. That's the wind traveling through the body and really speeding up the infection. So that would be wind heat, right? If there was a lot of mucus, then there would be wind heat and damp.

There's a lot of mucus, and we have fever, and we have sore throat, and we're coughing a lot of phlegm. Now we have wind, heat, and damp.

Is that make sense? So each pathogen has property to affect different area of our body. Dampness really affect the nose, but also the digestive system. That's why we can have diarrhea, vomiting when we have a bacteria infection, let's say like E. coli, right? Then we have fever, we're reacting. This is usually an invasion of damp and heat with the wind because it moves rapidly through the body.

Summer heat happens only in the summers, like a sunstroke. That is very much a summer heat, but all the other one can happen at any time. And usually more than one will come together. So often we say external pathogen always comes with a buddy. So that's the number one, remember?

First cause of disease is acute external pathogen invasion, which are infection, bacteria, viruses, and environmental factor, like a sunburn, a sunstroke, hypothermia.

Second cause of why we can be sick is internal emotions.

Now, the seven emotions, according to Chinese medicines, are anger, joy, sadness, fear, shock, worry, overthinking. And those emotions, of course, we want to feel them every day and we want to be able to feel them and process them. when those become long standing, then they will affect us physically.

Long-standing emotions will eventually create physical issues and that's why it's called internal because it will affect the organs. For example, if someone has a lot of worry and they're anxious and worry all the time, eventually that worry may create Ulcers in the stomach or a hole literally in the stomach.

Physical hole happen from the emotional of worry for many years. So that's what we call internal emotions. Now, each emotion affect the body in a different way. So let's look at them because. In TCM, we say 70 percent of all chronic disorders are due to long standing emotions. If we had emotional trauma as a child, absolutely it is going to affect us if we're not processing it, if we're not dealing with it.

And even if we did, it's still a trauma that is within our cellular level. And they change our body at the cell level, which is Unbelievable, but that means that if it did make the body sick, it can also make the body better. So anger, which affects the liver in Chinese medicine, also includes resentment, irritability, frustration, rage, bitterness, but also repressed anger.

If we don't express it, it is going to be repressed and create havoc on the body. on our TCM liver. It's going to create liver T stagnation with a lot of stress and tensions in the shoulder and temporal headache at the end of the day. It's going to create blood stagnation. It's going to create liver yang rising with high blood pressure, feeling angry, bursting out, insomnia, liver fire.

It is going to escalate specifically first as an excess pattern. And most symptoms are going to be, like I said, red face, insomnia, high blood pressure, and temporal headaches, which are usually worse with stress and at the end of the day. So this is why it's really important to know if patients have been having anger for many years, So if patients come in with a lot of resentment or frustration or irritability, we know we need to support their TCM, liver.

Joy or excessive excitement includes nervous laughter, laughing all the time for no reason, over excitement, over joy.

It's great to be happy, but sometimes it's too much and it will create some hard fire for some people. or some heart yin deficiency in the long run. Symptoms will be insomnia, specifically after too much excitement, like getting excited about going to Disneyland, or anything that makes you excited too much where you can't sleep.

Also poor focus, poor concentration, because we're too excited, too overjoyed, but also migraine, and sometimes people laugh for no reason because they're nervous and they're anxious, which affects the heart in Chinese medicine as well.

Worry and overthinking affects the spleen and stomach, or the digestive system in TCM. It includes excessive mental work, like being a student or working behind a computer all day, overstudying, and also feeling overwhelmed. People overthink, not necessarily worry, but when we worry, we definitely overthink.

Are you an overthinker? I sure am. So I know I have to protect my spleen. But those worry, overthinking, like I was saying earlier, can create havoc on the digestive system like nausea, acid reflex, , acid regurgitation, ger, bloating, cravings, and fatigue. It takes a lot of energy when we worry and we overthink all the time.

So this is really important when we have patients to ask them, are you a worrier? An overthinker, because it's going to give us clues of what is affected, right? Why do they have poor appetite? Why do they have bloating or nausea or ulcers? Because it's years of worrying.

Sadness and grief affect the lung in Chinese medicine, and they include crying often, depression, and of course we want to grieve when someone pass away.

But we also want to know that eventually we need to process the grief and a few years later we should be able to not feel like crying every two minutes, right? Does that make sense? So when someone is really depressed or they cry and they might say I cry all the time for no reason I have no reason to be sad.

It's going to create lung qi deficiency and or heart blood deficiency. And symptoms are going to be fatigue because it's exhausting to cry. And shortness of breath, poor memory and pale face.

So those are going to give us clues of how those emotions deplete the body and eventually deplete the immune system as well.

The last two are fear and shock, and they affect the TCM kidneys. And fear can be anxiety, irrational fear, or rational fear for that matter. Something is really scary, or someone is trying to scare you.

Feeling of insecurity. Shock is going to be more acute. It's like a bad news or a shock with trauma injury. Let's say a car accident. Make sense? So it's either mental shock or

physical shock, but it's very sudden. So when it comes to fear, long standing fear may cause kidney deficiency, and or kidney yin deficiency.

And the symptoms are going to be incontinence, specifically bladder incontinence, insomnia, fatigue, palpitation, anxiety, and sweating easily when we're anxious. When it comes to shock, it is going to create a kidney and heart chi deficiency, because it really depletes essence, because it's an impactful moment, either physical or emotional,

So usually we have sweating, uncontrolled urination, dizziness, and maybe fainting. So this is more of an acute one, but fear is definitely more of a chronic.

As you can see, the seven emotions are really creating havoc on our physical body, if longstanding. In my years of practice since 2003, so many of my patients have had physical problems that stem from longstanding emotional.

So, it's really important to address them. , the third cause of illnesses according to Chinese medicine is called others. And that always makes me laugh because what does that mean? Well, it's a big basket of a lot of different causes. So let's look at the first one, which is really overwork. If you do overwork physical or mental, it will affect your body. I had a patient years ago that used to fix, , commercial fridges, and he came to see me because he was on his knees eight hours of the day, even though he had pads under his knees, he was in so much pain because eight hours of the day he was on his knees.

We couldn't remove the cause because the cause was work and he wasn't going to stop working until he retires so we had to manage the pain and the acupuncture helped managing the disease because of course we could not remove it but it helped him.

I had another patient who was a security guard. He stood all day long and didn't move much because that's what he did. Can you imagine the pressure on his lower back and his hips? His whole back was always in pain, because you stand and you don't move on the spot, there's no circulation, and it puts a lot of pressure on the back and the knees.

So that affects the kidney and TCM, right? I had another patient who was a hairdresser. Now hairdresser, there's two things that can happen. Often they stand on high heels, on concrete floor, the floor is really hard and they stand all day doing hair.

So again, knee problem, low back problem, that is a kidney chi depleting. The second one is they also do the hair, which they use their hand and shoulder to blow dry their patients, and that creates a lot of upper shoulder and neck pain as well. On top of it,

they're breathing chemicals all day long when they dye people's hair. That also affects the lung and creates some allergic reaction. A lot of my patients who are hairdressers do have environmental allergies because it affects the lung chi. See how we found the root cause?

This is why it's really important to ask patients, what do they do for a living? Because it will give us clues of where the root cause can be. The next one is exercise. Exercise is great for us. We have people that don't exercise, and then we have people that over exercise, right? The whole point is a balanced exercise routine. So when I have patients that never exercise and sit a lot at their job, there's going to be some liver qi stagnation.

And there's going to be maybe weight gain because they're not having a great diet. Also, maybe depression or worrying or anxiety because they're not feeding the brain great oxygen by going to exercise specifically outside. So movement is really important, even if it's yoga, tai chi, whatever the exercise should be part of everybody's routine, but it can give us clues of what's going on.

The opposite is over exercise, right? So often I have a lot of women that may over exercise to keep their weight down and that really affects their reproductive system and a lot of them may have amenorrhea, so no period, or very scanty menstruation and in TCM it's a blood deficiency. I see this a lot with Teenage girls who are still developing their reproductive system and are overexercising because they're competing and not eating enough, specifically if they're into ballet or places where they have to keep their weight down.

This is really showing up as no period at all, which as we know, is completely unhealthy. Even though People don't think it's unhealthy or a disorder because, hey, I don't have a period, this is great. Well, no, it's not, specifically because the body is not having its normal function.

The next cause is a big one. Because the digestive system is at the center of our health. If you look at from the top of your head to underneath the sole of your foot, it's literally halfway or in the middle and that's why it's called the Zhong Qi or the middle Qi because it is in the middle and it means it's at the center of our health.

That's why diet is key to rich optimum health. And this is really important as practitioners to educate patients on what's best at this time, at this stage for this person in their life. In order to heal, to feel better, and to have the body reach optimum health.

So when it comes to diet, we can have constant craving, and usually that is a spleen cheese deficiency.

We can also eat too much sugar, too much fat. fat, and that also will create spleen sheen efficiency with dampness, and it puts so much pressure on the digestive system. So diabetes type 2, for example, completely reversible with a change of diet.

This is why I'm saying like the root cause is the diet. Can we remove it with type 2? Absolutely. With type 1? No. Right? There's a difference there. So this is really, truly important to look at diet. Too much cold food and raw food can create a spleen young deficiency because the spleen does not like raw and cold food.

Also, too much spicy food, coffee, or alcohol can create some excess heat in the stomach and in the liver with some fire coming up like heartburn, acid reflux because it's too acidic and it's too hot for the stomach, so diet for us is so key to looking at how we can manage diseases.

We can look at something like fatigue. Fatigue often is a dehydration and low nutrients. All we have to do is look at a diet and make sure we are nourished with hydration, lubrication, and the right food.

Diagnosis has to be the hardest part of Chinese medicine. We always say there is no wrong treatment in TCM, only the wrong diagnosis. This is why I created my second book, Chinese Medicine Made Easy, to make it easy to grasp using a lot of colorful visuals. I have included all Chinese medicine foundations, which are listed in the description below.

Yin Yang Theory, Five Elements, Zong Fu Organ, all of it. All diagnosis, of course, including tongue and pulse. Practice case studies to help you improve your skills, as well as give you access to my online fillable intake form to use with your own patients. You can download the digital version on any device, and it comes with many video links to complement it.

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organized with great pictures, makes memorizing a lot easier. This book will definitely make my learning a lot more productive. Yay!

So happy to hear that. You've done it again. You are amazing. I wish we had your resources 20 years ago back in TCM school. This also makes my day because this is why I do what I've been doing with Acupro Academy for quite a few years now to support everyone. Check out the links in the show notes below or go to my website [acuproacademy.com](http://acuproacademy.com) and click the shop tab on the menu bar and get your copy today.

So far, under the umbrella of others cause of diseases, we've had number one, was overworked, physical or mental, exercise, too much or not enough, and diet.

Number four is trauma injury. A car accident, whiplash, breaking something, sprain, strain, anything that's going to be an impact on the musculoskeletal and create injury.

Obviously, that is a cause of illness, and when it starts at the acute stage, it's always a blood stagnation. So, if we have a sprain, or a strain, or we break a bone, we're gonna have blood stasis. When it's swelling, there's dampness, when there is, obviously, the inflammation, is heat. However, eventually, that trauma injury could create permanent painful muscular issue, so I have a patient that had a car accident four years ago and is still in pain right now He came to see me after four years trying everything and he's still in pain now His body is constant constantly in that pain specifically in the upper back shoulder and neck And this now is a chronic pain and what was the root cause? The car accident, which is trauma injury. So now we have to manage the pain because he's been in pain for so long and there was no treatment for so long,

the body is adapted and now is constantly in pain. Number five is medication side effects. Now, when it comes to medication, some people are in one, two, three or twelve medications. I see a lot of patients that go through IVF because I see a lot of women doing fertility and when they come and see me, they said, Oh, you know, I heard that acupuncture is great to support my IVF journey.

And what we do with the support is not only we bring blood flow to the uterus, we try to really help support the process of IVF by also trying to balance the side effect of the medication. When my patients get night sweats or hot flashes due to taking certain medication like Clomid, then my job is to try to lessen the side effect of medication.

Number six is radiation, like microwave, like wifi, all the radiation that's surrounding us always creates inflammation, which means it creates heat in the body.

Number seven is recreational drugs, so illegal drugs like cocaine and LSD and heroin, it is going to create some issue on the body. Usually it's going to weaken the heart, weaken the kidney, but also create phlegm in the mind. Thank you.

Number eight is wrong treatment and that can happen to any modality. Now we hear things like the patient went in for surgery and they amputated the wrong leg and that is horrible or they left a sponge and they sold the person back together. That's another horrible one. As TCM practitioners, can we cause wrong treatment?

Absolutely. What about if the needle goes and puncture a lung? That's pneumothorax. That is wrong treatment, right? . Anybody can have a wrong treatment in their modality.

That is part of causes of illnesses. Number nine is a weak constitution, basically our genetic. Now our genetic doesn't mean it's forever what's going to happen, but it's going to give us clues of imbalances. If we know our parents have had a lot of cardiovascular disease, it's really important for us to take care of our heart.

Just as a preventative method, TCM is really good when it comes to prevention, but it's also why on our intake form for patients, we ask about health history or family health history. So we know. What to look for if there is any indication that this patient may also have genetically an issue with a specific Disorder I have a patient who had Crohn's disease Her mom had Crohn's disease her sister had Crohn's disease So obviously it's running around this family and what we can do to support our patients when it comes to genetics, right?

Now with epigenetics that is coming around to show that there could be some manipulation of genetic and we can see some progress into that field, it's so cool to see. But weak constitution or genetic disorders shows us that the root cause can come from that specific. Cause, yes.

Number 10 is smoking. Less people are smoking, but in a lot of countries in the world, there's still a lot of smokers. So that is a cause of disease that's easy to understand because of course, smoking is not good for you. Now there's also the vapors now.

So now that could be a cause of disease as well. When it comes to smoking cigarettes, it's lung qi deficiency, lung yin deficiency, and eventually it will create some toxicity, it could create emphysema, which would lead to lung yang deficiency as well. But no matter what, it depletes the lung in general, in TCM. And that's it. Three causes. External pathogen, internal emotions, and others. Now, I know what you're thinking. Well,

Clara, where does cancer fit in? Well If it's lung cancer, often it's going to be smoking. Is it always smoking? No. It could be breathing asbestos or other chemical for years and years and years that affects the lung.

For some people there's none of that. Could it be sadness, grief, that affects the lung because it hasn't been processed and eventually depletes the lung at the cellular level. When it comes to uterus cancer, it could be sexual trauma, it could be genetic, it could be a virus, it could be a lot of one of those causes that can come to change the cellular level of the uterus and the cancer cell activate, okay? people often give me a disorder like Parkinson's. Parkinson's is neurological. What happened there? Is it due to invader of a pathogen, like a virus or bacteria years ago? Is it due to genetics?

But where is that coming from? There's always a cause. And it could be any of the cause. We discussed today, there's always a root cause. Is it easy to find out what it is all the time? No, sometimes it takes weeks to figure out what happened, right? I had a patient that came with fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia is been known to, well, we're not sure about the cause.

Maybe it's autoimmune. Maybe it's stress. Maybe it's gut issue. They're not really sure. Each person, it might be a different cause. Maybe it's years of stress and eventually the body said enough and showed up as pain, one of my patients came in and she said, Oh, I've been diagnosed two years ago with fibromyalgia.

I said, well, what happened two years ago? She goes, nothing. I was on vacation in Mexico when the pain started. So this is what's interesting because she was on vacation, meaning she allowed her body to relax and the body told her, this is how I've been feeling. Now I'm going to show you how. Before you went to Mexico, what happened?

Oh, years of stress. And she told me all the story of the stress and it was really stressful. I don't know how she handled it for so many years. Of course, her body is breaking down and now there's fibromyalgia. Does that make sense? So, That's why we always have to look for the root cause to explain to patients what our treatment plan is going to be and to ask our patients to also support the treatment plan by being compliant in any educational material or recommendation we can provide in order for them to manage or eradicate the problem.

Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. I truly hope you benefited from this episode and I would love for you to share it with a friend that may benefit from

it as well. Follow the show, leave a review. And if you want more. Go to my website, [acuproacademy.com](http://acuproacademy.com). I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case studies, free courses, and so much more, and connect with me on all social media at [acuproacademy.com](http://acuproacademy.com).

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