

# Discourse on Wind

## Chapter 42 Su Wen

Translated and annotated by Dan Tennenbaum

The Yellow Emperor asks:

When wind harms a person, it may cause cold and hot (fevers and chills), or it may cause heat in the center or cold in the center, or li-wind (leprosy), or one-sided withering, or it may cause wind. The diseases are all different and their names are not the same. Sometimes (the pathogen) reaches the five zang and six fu (internal organs). I don't know the reason for it and would like to hear your explanation:

Qi Bo replied:

When wind is stored in the skin, it cannot flow into the interior or be released through the exterior.

Note: When the wind at first invades the body, it is able to do so, because the pores and interstices are open and draining, maybe the person is sweating after prolonged exercise, or weakened from illness, or sleeping while exposed to drafts from open windows, fans or air conditioners. Once it is inside the body it gets to reside in the muscles and interstices. At that stage, due to the irritation by the wind, it caused the pores and interstices to close, consequently the pathogenic qi is unable to flow out to the exterior, but it also is unable to progress deeper inside the body.

The wind has the characteristic of movement and it undergoes many changes. When the pores and interstices are open, then (the person) feels cold, like after being soaked from a sprinkle; when the pores and interstices are closed, then (the person) feels hot and vexed. If (the person) feels cold, then the desire for food and drink is decreased, if he feels hot, then this consumes his muscle and flesh (loss of weight), hence (this condition) causes a person to shiver and lose his appetite. It is termed cold and hot.

Note: Wind is a yang pathogen, its nature is to move, once it enters the body it moves and twists causing acute illnesses, with many possible symptoms. When wind invades the body, if the person's yang qi is weakened, then the pores and interstices are open (see note above). The yang qi drains out and cannot firm up the pores and interstices at the exterior. The patient feels chilled and uncomfortable, like when someone gets chilled after getting soaking wet from rain or profuse sweating. If the person's yang qi is abundant, then the pores and interstices close up, the wind is trapped at the interior, the yang qi is unable to drain and release sweat, hence heat is generated, the heat accumulates at the interior and consequently, the individual feels agitated and vexed in his chest.

In the case of the yang deficient person, the cold qi progresses inwards to reach the stomach, causing the stomach and spleen to lose its normal function of digesting and assimilating foods, and thus gradually his appetite is reduced.

In the individual with abundant yang qi, the heat (fever) consumes body fluids, thus he loses weight (his muscles and flesh wither). If the two conditions mutually occur, it causes the individual to be chilled, have a fever and lose appetite, this is termed cold hot, or what we nowadays refer to as fevers and chills.

If wind enters the stomach via the yang ming (channel), it will follow the course of the channel up to the inner canthus of the eye.

- If the individual is fat, then the wind qi cannot drain and (be released) toward the outside. Consequently, his center gets hot and the eyes become yellow (damp heat).
- If the person is lean, then the (pathogenic wind) is able to drain to the exterior and hence he will feel cold. There is cold in the center and the eyes are tearing.

If the wind qi enters via the tai yang channel, it passes through all the Shu points, scatters into the separations in the flesh, (where) it clashes with the wei qi, whose pathways are (now) blocked; this causes a swelling and distension of the muscles and (produces) ulcers. The wei qi is stagnated and unable to circulate, hence there are (areas) with muscular numbness.

Note: The shu points of the five zang and six fu are all on the back along the course of the tai yang bladder channel. The function of the tai yang qi is to guard and regulate the body's exterior, therefore the wind qi intrudes the body via the tai yang meridian. The wind travels along the course of the tai yang meridian and passes all the shu points and trickles into the interstices of the whole body, which are the areas travelled by the wei protective qi. Since the wind blocks that path, a struggle between the pathogen and the wei qi takes place and the wind is retained and blocked in the muscles and interstices. This causes the muscles to be swollen and distended and ulcers are formed. Because the wei qi cannot circulate freely, it may cause areas of numbness.

In regards to Li-(wind), the nutritive qi heats and rots (decomposes), its qi is not clear, hence it causes the column of the nose to decay and ruin the complexion. The skin has festering ulcers. The wind cold lodges inside the (blood) vessels and doesn't leave, this is termed Li-wind, it is also named cold and heat.

Note: Li feng or also called feng lai, or da feng. The modern biomedical term is ma feng bing, leprosy. The etiology and pathogenesis of the disease is wind entering the blood vessels *mai*, that penetrates inside and transform into heat. The key etiological factor is that the qi congeals and the blood heats up. There is a saying in TCM: "Vessels and wind form leprosy *mai feng cheng wei li*" *Su Wen: Mai Yao Jing We Lun*. The same section also states: "The wind lodges inside the vessels and doesn't leave, this is called leprosy *li feng*." The symptoms and manifestations are the nasal column (bridge of the nose) is decayed and the complexion defeated, the skin has festering ulcers." *Su Wen Feng Lun*.

"The bones and joints are swollen, the hairs of the eyebrows and eyelids fall off, this is termed *Da Feng*" (*Su Wen: Chang Ci Jie Lun*)

In regards to the treatment of leprosy the *Nei Jing* says: "Needle the flesh and muscles repeatedly, cause sweating for 100 days; needle the bones and marrow, (induce) sweat for 100 days. After 200 days, the hair will grow back and needling can cease". In another quote it directs: "Li feng, pierce the swelling directly, once pricked, pull out the needle and prick another spot, press on it to squeeze out the pathogenic qi, once the swelling has been expressed, one can stop; (the patient should) eat the recommended food, avoid the food that cause harm. (*Ling Shu: Si Shi Qi*.)

These quotes all indicate that while treating leprosy, emphasis must be given to dispersing the pathogen, to ensure that the wind poison dissipates and is eradicated. Furthermore, the physician must pull out the needle and squeeze out the pernicious qi (blood and pus), until the swelling subsides. Thirdly, the patient must pay close attention to dietary advice and contraindications. Stick to mild flavored, clean foods and avoid strange foods from far away areas.

In the book *Zhu Bing Yuan Hou Lun* the author Chao Yuan Fang pointed out, that the condition of feng li, besides being caused by externally contracted wind, is also caused by a variety of other factors including concurrent internal injury by food and overexertion. Due to the combination of these factors, parasites grow at the interior of the body, and may cause excessive itching and scratching. The symptoms: At the beginning there is numbness of

the skin, a feeling as if bugs are crawling inside the skin, then as the condition progresses, gradually the whole body grows ulcers, and finally the parasites eat the internal organs, manifested by falling out of the eyebrows and decaying of the bridge of the nose. First administer powdered Omphalia *Lei Wan* to get rid of the parasites.” The *Yi Xue Xin Wu* formulates the treatment principles - clear damp heat and eliminate wind pathogen. It suggests internal administration of Sophora Decoction *Ku Shen Tang* in conjunction with Rehmannia Wine *Di Huang Jiu* and external application of Chinese Angelica Ointment *Dang Gui Gao*.

If the wind injures a person in spring during the jia and yi (periods), it will cause liver wind.

If wind harms a person in summer during the bing and ding (periods), it will cause heart wind.

If (exogenous) pathogen injures a person in late summer during the wu and ji (periods), it will cause spleen wind.

If a person is struck by (exogenous) pathogen in autumn, during geng and xin (periods), it will cause lung wind.

If during the ren and gui (periods) of winter a person is struck by (exogenous) pathogen, it will cause kidney wind.

If wind strikes the shu points of the five zang and six fu, it will cause zang fu wind, each entering through its corresponding gate; the area it strikes results in unilateral wind (one-sided withering).

When wind follows (the channel) up from wind mansion (GV 16), it causes brain wind.

If wind enters the connection (system) with the head, it may cause eye wind. The eyes are cold. Getting struck by wind while being intoxicated with alcohol, is called dripping wind.

Getting afflicted by wind while sweating during sexual intercourse is termed internal wind.

If someone is injured by wind just after washing (the body), it is called head wind.

If wind enters the center over an extended period of time, it leads to intestinal wind, (manifested by) diarrhea of undigested food.

If the (wind pathogen) resides outside at the pores and interstices, it causes leakage wind (continuous perspiration).

Hence wind is the leading (cause) of the one hundred diseases.

As to its changes and transformations, other illnesses may arise (out of it). There is no fixed direction (from where it comes), but whatever brings on (the illness), it is the wind qi.

The Yellow Emperor asks:

What are the different manifestations of wind afflicting the five zang? I would like to hear about the diagnosis and the manifestations (for each organ).

Qi Bo responds:

The manifestations of lung wind (include): Profuse sweating, aversion to wind, pale facial color, coughing spells, shortness of breath, with amelioration (of the symptoms) during daytime, and aggravation at night. It is diagnosed above the eyebrow, where the color is white.

The manifestations of heart wind (include): Profuse sweating, aversion to wind, a scorched ending (of the tongue)/restlessness, easily angry and reprimanding (or sad and scared), their

(facial) color is red. If the disease is severe, the person cannot talk smoothly and fluently. It is diagnosed at the mouth, (where) its color is red.

The manifestations of liver wind (include): Profuse sweating, aversion to wind, a tendency to sadness (some say anger), the color is slightly greenish, the throat is dry, and the patients are easily angered, at times they dislike women. It is diagnosed below the eyes, where the color is blue-green.

The manifestations of spleen wind (include): Profuse sweating, aversion to wind, the body feels tired, (the individual) doesn't want to move his four limbs, the facial color is slightly yellow, they do not desire to eat, it is diagnosed on the tip of the nose, where the color is yellow.

The manifestations of kidney wind (include): Profuse sweating, aversion to wind, there is edematous swelling of the face, pain affecting the spine, inability to stand up straight, its color is like soot, the hidden bend (organs of the groin) is not flowing freely, it is diagnosed at the chin, where the color has a black hue.

Note: Instead of "the hidden bend (organs of the groin) is not flowing freely", some say "(the person) cannot bend and stretch".

The manifestations of stomach wind (include): Profuse sweating from the neck, aversion to wind, food and fluids don't descend well, the diaphragm is obstructed and impassable, the abdomen is frequently distended, when the individuals take off their clothes, one can see the bloating; ingestion of cold foods leads to diarrhea, the diagnosis (is established) by a thin physical appearance and an enlarged abdomen.

Note: Treat with Stomach Wind Decoction *Wei Feng Tang (Xuan Ming Lun Fang)*, or Ginseng Stomach Wind Decoction *Ren Shen Wei Feng Tang (He Ji Ju Fang)*.

The manifestations of head wind (include): Profuse sweating from the head and face, aversion to wind, the pain is most severe one day prior to the (onset of) the wind, there is headache and (the pathogen) cannot escape from the interior, once the day of the wind has arrived, the condition has slightly ameliorated.

Note: Being afflicted by wind while washing one's hair or taking a bath, the wind resides in the head leading to pathologies affecting the structures of the head, such as headaches, dental pain, ear ache, sneezing etc. The symptoms may include sweating from the head as well as aversion to wind. Treat by dispersing wind and alleviating headache. Formulas include: Notoptergium Powder *Qiang Huo San (zheng bu nei jing shi yi fang lun)*, Angelica Root Powder *Bai Zhi San (Zheng Zhi Zhun Sheng)*; the Chinese Lovage and Tea Powder *Chuan Xiong Cha Tiao San*, or the Chrysanthemum with Tea Powder *Ju Hua Cha Tiao San* may also be used.

Conditions of foehn, mistral, santa ana winds often lead to headache 1 day prior to the actual winds, also see NY times Oct 6, 1981, [Ions Created By Winds May Prompt Changes In Emotional ...](#)

The manifestations of dripping wind (include): There may be profuse sweating, often (the individuals) cannot (even) wear single layer clothing, after eating they sweat, in extreme cases

the whole body sweats profusely, there is panting and aversion to wind; their clothes are often wet, the mouth is dry, they are thirsty and unable to perform any strenuous work.

Note: Patients suffering from dripping wind overindulged in alcoholic beverages, injuring the Spleen; this generates internal damp pathogen that transforms into heat. Furthermore, alcohol is warm and dissipating in nature, if afflicted by wind, it will result in persistent sweating. The etiology and pathologic mechanism consist in yang qi dissipating and overflowing, resulting in depletion of yin fluids at the interior. As a treatment administer *Alisma Decoction ze xie yin* to boost the righteous qi, get rid of wind, dry up damp pathogen and stop sweating.

The manifestations of outflow wind (include): Profuse sweating, causes the clothes to be soaked, dry mouth, the top (part of the body) is wet, when windy, the person cannot exert himself, if the whole body aches, it is caused by cold.

Note: In conditions of outflow wind the yang qi is deficient and unable to firm up the exterior pores and interstices, which are left open and the sweat drains out. The disease locus is the skin, the chief symptoms are constant sweating, especially of the upper part of the body, accompanied by a dry mouth, generalized pain and cold sensation. According to Zhang Jie Bin one must warm the yang, firm up the exterior and balance the ying and wei, administer the Jade Windscreen Powder *Yu Ping Feng San* or the Cinnamon and Aconite Decoction *Gui Zhi Fu Zi Tang*.

Yellow Emperor: Good

Method: I relied mostly on the "Collection of Expert Annotations to the Su Wen 素问注释汇粹" by Cheng Shi De, 内经 by Wang Hong Tu, Henry Lu's translation of the Nei Jing, Yellow Empero's Canon Internal Medicine, by Nelson Liansheng Wu, Andrew Qi Wu, and Paul Unschuld's Su Wen.