

The Power of the Elements: Natural Skin Care Revealed

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In Chinese philosophy there are five elements that affect us throughout our lives. The blend of these elements, both at the time of our birth and throughout the seasons of each year, will determine which organs and glands are under stress, what our temperament will be like and even what our skin will express. So it is only natural that the way you treat your skin should be based on this ancient elemental system.

There are five elements in Chinese theory and during each shift in season, these elements will also change with one becoming more dominant than another. The element of your birth month and year is your inherent trait and then this will react differently depending on the seasonal element that you are exposed to. The five

elements are Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water. The solution to balancing the body and the skin lies in balancing your inherent element with your seasonal element.

Wood is the element of Spring and wood people are prone to gallbladder and liver weakness as well as arthritis. The color of the wood element is green and color is also an important feature. Green promotes balance and the sense of smell. It is antiseptic and has a beneficial effect on balancing situations of cancer. Wood is the element associated with the East and is the element of cleansing. A typical Wood will be very focused, make plans and decisions easily, rise early and be a great organizer. They are "idea" people. Sight is the dominant sense so in Chinese medicine sight is linked to liver health. This means that a weakening of the wood elemental will create problems with vision, including tear production. Wood people will tend to prefer sour or vinegary foods and shouting is a common indication of loss of wood.

The skin for Wood people expresses stress. Their skin may tend to be oily with blackheads and hyperpigmentation. Their muscles will be tight, leading to tendon and ligament issues. It is the circulation of energy that is the core of Wood health.

Wood is dominant in the spring from the beginning of February until mid-April.

Fire is the element of Summer extending from the beginning of May until mid-July with the focus on the heart, small intestine and the regulation of body temperature and circulation. A weakness of fire can create a sensation of coolness in the chest, solar plexus or umbilicus. Fire people are heart-based and thus the color red is the color for Fire. Fire is the ability to rule, to understand, to perceive, which may explain the small intestine link since this organ of the body sorts the "good" from the "bad". Fire gives enthusiasm and vitality, the ability to laugh and the ability to accept change well. It is the element of the South and is associated with joy. Too much fire can create excess heat in the body including inflammation and a craving for bitter flavors.

Fire is balanced by the element Water, just as the color blue balances the color red. The skin of fire people tends to be couperose, red and blotchy. It can be easily irritated and sensitive including rosacea. Fire people will have excessive perspiration or a lack of fire will produce no perspiration at all.

Metal is the time of Autumn and the focus is on structure and communication. The color for metal is white and it is related to the West. Autumn begins the dark yin cycle and so mental well-being, sinus, colds are all indicative of the organs that are affected which are the large intestines and the lungs. Emotions are strong in metal people with worry, grief and sorrow always strong forces. The sound of crying provides a great release to metal people.

Metal skin may have excessive whiteness and the cheeks may be pale. Metal skin depends on lymphatic health and mineralization. Typical metal symptoms are mineral deficiency disorders, heavy legs and hips, dull and lifeless skin. Metal season extends from the beginning of August through mid-October.

Water is the element of Winter and the direction is North. It is a deep yin element affecting the bladder, kidneys and the tone of the body. Water people are always trying to conserve energy and resources and because of the cold climate preference, they can experience back pain and stiffness as a result of dehydration. They prefer salty foods and fear is the emotion they experience most, even to the point of trembling. Hearing is the dominant sense and it is interesting that the ears and the kidneys have the same shape. They tend to have fertility issues including impotence and are strongly related to the moon cycles. Their health can be seen in their head hair, around the eyes and in the health of their teeth and bones. They are compassionate, understanding and responsive.

The color for water is blue, but can also be black as the deepest waters are. The color blue relates to insomnia and palpitations, often common symptoms of excessive fear. Water skin can be dehydrated and lacking in tone. There can be edema and water retention with black circles around the eyes and puffiness. Water time is early November through mid-January.

The last element is Earth and this is a transitional element. The time of Earth actually occurs in between each season, so there are four Earth periods in a year lasting about 2 1/2 weeks at the ends of January, April, July and October. Earth is yellow and is related to the spleen, stomach and the menstrual cycle. The lips are a good indicator of health. Earth people are sympathetic, obsessive and stubborn. Singers tend to be earth people and those with a strong speaking voice. Earth people can manifest many things making fertility a strong characteristic of earth, thus connecting to the idea of Mother Earth.

Earth skin requires detoxification, so common issues are acne, toxicity, cysts and cellulite. There will be localized weight gain around the abdomen and legs and lymphatic circulation is essential to enhance the ability of the body to detoxify efficiently.

By understanding the interaction of your inherent birth element with the dominant element of the season, you can accurately predict complications before they happen and prevent illness from occurring year in and year out just as the Chinese have done since ancient times.