



CHINESE & ASIAN MEDICINE

Minding the Gap: The *Tan* Cycle 24-Hour Clock (Pt. 2)

THE DAYTIME HOURS

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Author's Note: [Part 1](#) of this article discussed the nighttime hours of what I call the *Tan* Cycle 24-Hour Clock, which is meant to be an evolution of the TCM clock. The shift proposed by this evolution is based on current, modern physiological understanding and observation.

8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

The first part of the daytime is associated with the metal / air element. Large intestine motility slows during the nighttime hours, and begins to rise in the morning as an indication of “good” digestion and “normal” intestinal motility. Often, healthy bowel movements occur between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Large intestinal motility is tied to circadian rhythm; an inability to evacuate bowels in the morning can signify pathology of the large intestine and lack of healthy digestive physiology.¹

10:00 a.m. to Noon

From 10:00 a.m. to noon, focus turns toward the lungs. Lung energy has been observed to dip just before noon.² For people experiencing respiratory pathology, or issues in lung capacity and performance, this dip in physiologic function is noticeable, to the extent that some people actually reduce amounts of medication needed for chronic lung conditions, if that medicine is taken before noon, as opposed to in the morning or evening.³ This is worth consideration when recommending any herbal, vitamin, or mineral supplements within a plan of care for someone with lung pathology.

This time window may be used to enhance pleural resilience by focusing on meditation and breathing exercises in the hours just before noon.

In a healthy person, this dip in functional physiology is barely noticeable. As such, any reduction in lung function between 10:00 a.m. and noon may be a sign of respiratory pathology. I have found this to be true for several clients who have chronic lung impairment related to exposure to environmental toxins.

Studies have shown the highest lung function to be between the hours of 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.³ This time window would be most beneficial for aerobic exercise.

The hours between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. [discussed below] on the *Tan Cycle Clock* are reserved for the spleen and triple warmer, respectively. The connection between the lungs and these tissue systems is linked anatomically as well as energetically. Both of these tissue systems border the lungs, above and below. The spleen and triple warmer tissue complex of the middle burner, the lesser omentum, border the lower lungs and are separated from the lungs by the diaphragm.

The upper area of the lungs, the pleural dome or thoracic inlet, is the location of the upper burner of the triple warmer. The triple warmer tissue system is classified as any area of brown adipose tissue (BAT) concentration throughout the body, and includes specific areas and organs such as the lesser omentum and greater omentum.⁴

The strength of the lung energy during this time window illustrates the lifting and supportive power the lungs have to assist the functions of the spleen and triple warmer. This is described in *tan cycle theory*, as well as reflected in the *yi*, spirit affiliation of the metal / air element, the holographic reflection and embodiment of the spirit *yi*, located within the spleen. The *yi* is also referred to as the "Consciousness of Potentials," shared in kind by the metal/ air element and spleen, respectively.⁴

Noon to 4:00 p.m.

The time between noon and 4:00 p.m. is a great time of day to energetically focus on attributes of the earth element, such as grounded productivity and assessment of the state of affairs of the day. This is a great time to root down in the context of present and future potentials, through diligent work and planning, or taking time to restore one's self in nature.

Grounding within the environment during this time window is very beneficial to the soul. When we are able to connect with nature, somehow, someway, this gives the day balance in the modern world. We are able to live in a more self-supported, resilient space.

This article series, "Minding the Gap," is meant to stimulate a discussion about creating a bridge between the insight and artistry of the ancient healing practices attributed to Asian medical theories, and the awareness that has been gained over the past two centuries of modern medical and environmental science. The thesis is that a paradigm shift is affecting our world culture; modern life requires an evolution and advancement of the ancient ways to meet the needs and demands of the human nervous system, and life on Earth, today and into the future. A shift away from the power over paradigm toward a rise of intrinsically supportive and transformational healing energies is here.

The afternoon is also an ideal time of day to check in with body and mind, and release patterns of self-abandonment or self-sabotage that may rise from taking on more than one is able to manage. This is also the perfect time of day to do a self-assessment to see if there are any ways one could be more compassionate with one's self, by setting healthy boundaries and expectations relative to obligations for the rest of the day.

Between noon and 2:00 p.m., stomach energy is often active, digesting a midday meal. This is followed by activation of the spleen channel through the pancreas, as insulin is released approximately 90 minutes after eating.

In modern times, with stress levels being elevated in the morning, and cortisol levels sustained to accommodate a demand greater than was required in the pre-modern era, many people describe not feeling hungry in the morning, as well as an inability to eat until midday. This preference has been supported by recent research into the benefits of intermittent fasting, also called time-restricted feeding (TRF).

TRF refers to the ingestion of all of caloric intake for the day within a 6-8 hour time window. Usually, calories are delegated to the second half of the day, leaving the rest of the day (16-18 hours) as a fasting state. Studies have shown this practice facilitates reduction of inflammation levels, and assists in the process of cell regeneration. TRF has been found to actually increase insulin sensitivity and decrease insulin resistance.⁵ This practice attenuates the function of the pancreas, supporting the energy of the spleen.

The Early Evening

Moving forward in time, the fire element begins the early evening. This time window is ideally associated with relaxation and assimilation of the experiences of the day; the embodiment of equanimity that can be found at this time is the radiance of a fire element in balance.

The triple warmer is associated with areas of BAT, and these areas are often activated during this time in those who practice TRF. BAT is also associated with body temperature regulation. As the sun fades at certain latitudes and times of year, during the hours of 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. BAT may become activated, increasing metabolism and thermogenesis.⁶

The *yin* organ pair to the *yang* triple warmer is the small intestine.⁴ This is the organ that helps absorb and assimilate: the nutrients from the food we eat; as well as on a quantum level, information and experiences we integrate from the day. The energy of this organ is most active between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.

If a meal was eaten earlier in the day, the contents will have made its way to the small intestine by this time through normal peristaltic movement, to be further digested and assimilated throughout mesenteric circulation.⁷

This is also time that is often shared, igniting an appreciation for the present moment by recollecting and assimilating our individual experiences of the day. During this time we are able to connect with ourselves in a meaningful way, or come together in community with others.

Key Takeaways

The flow of energy through the *Tan* Cycle 24-Hour Clock leads with the *yang* organ, followed by the *yin* paired organ, with the exception of the nebulous nighttime hours in which the *yin* and *yang*

share space. This flow of organ affiliations associated with the five elements reflects the flow of *qi* within the *tan* cycle theory.⁴

This evolution of the traditional 24-hour clock is meant to provide inspiration. The intention is to initiate a process of gradually expanding and uniting the ancient wisdom and theories found in traditional healing methods of the East, with the utility and viability of a knowing afforded by modern Western methods of investigation.

References

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