

Chinese Medicine, Color and Beauty

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From a Chinese medicine standpoint, the most important step toward looking younger by using some sort of facial or cosmetic acupuncture technique is balancing the overall (internal) energy in your patient's body before you do a cosmetic or facial treatment. Really, one of the best things about getting your patients hooked on cosmetic acupuncture is that you are treating their general health every time you give them a treatment. In this article, we will talk about how you can see what is happening on the inside by looking at the color(s) of the skin. When doing cosmetic acupuncture, you are looking at the patient's face very carefully; maybe more carefully than you generally do, thereby allowing you to detect even subtle changes in color in certain areas or along one of the meridians.

Let's talk about black first. It seemed that my teachers always warned us about seeing black on a person's skin because it signifies that the patient's kidney system is not working very well. At best, black is a sign of severe stagnation or severe *yin* and/or *yang* deficiency or damage. Black is not a good sign. As it turns out, where do I see black most often? Under and around the eyes. Naturally, when the person asks if I can make that black go away by doing a cosmetic acupuncture procedure, I tell them that blackness is a sign about something going on in their constitution, not just about the skin. Because Chinese medicine is based on finding the root of the problem or condition, I can address the black using acupuncture points and herbal prescriptions that may not be directly related to a cosmetic procedure but will treat the constitution.

This is one of my main issues with modern day cosmetic procedures; they only address the outside, which allows the person to continue to age at a more rapid pace. Blackness under the eyes may also be a sign of dehydration so I remind my patients about drinking enough fluids. It will help moisturize the skin. However, the main point is that when we see black on the face, we need to address the kidneys.

White is the color that is generally associated with the lungs. A slightly pale face may be an indication of *qi* deficiency. Your kidney-*qi*-deficient asthmatics may tend to have a paler face than other people. It is said that bright pale may indicate a situation of *yang* deficiency, while a duller shade of pale may be more indicative of blood deficiency. You may also notice that patients who have lung diseases like emphysema have faces that are a grayish color, and you may see many very elderly people who look kind of gray. This may be because their lungs have lost the capacity to maintain a proper flow relation of oxygen and carbon dioxide. It may also be due to liver *qi* stagnation not allowing proper *qi* flow to the face or that they have never exfoliated their skin, which can also lead to a grayish look. However, I always look at the state of the lungs first.

We associate the color yellow with the spleen. A yellowish face may belong to a person who has chronic dampness and/or chronic *qi* and blood deficiency. A brighter yellow color may be a sign of damp heat in the system. As we all talk with our patients about their digestion we've all had them tell us that their digestion is "great"; I've even had some people tell me that "it's perfect." Then I can see in

their pulses that their digestion does not work well, thereby confirming that their poor digestion is showing up on their face as a yellow color. You would be surprised at how many people tell you that their digestion works well, even though they are taking medication for it. Or, their digestion works well as long as they don't eat certain things. That means it doesn't work well and you may see yellow around their eyes or mouth or in other areas on their face.

The color red is generally associated with the heart. A dull color on a dry face may indicate emptiness, while a dark red, dull color is more indicative of stagnation. Remember that you may also study the color of the lips, which can reflect the state of digestion. Red or purplish lips may be another sign of digestion that doesn't work very well. Or if you have any patients who have regular severe heartburn you may try to see if their lips are redder than those of people without heartburn.

Green on the person's face is indicative of issues with the liver. Some people have such severe liver *qi* stagnation that their face has an overall green tint to it; it's usually fairly scrunched as well. We must also remember that liver *qi* stagnation may lead to blood deficiency, heat-related issues like rashes, headaches, and (naturally) digestive issues. It is interesting that in the part of Chinese medicine that uses food as therapy, some green foods are recommended to resolve stagnation. Scallions are said to relieve congestion and relax muscle tension, and celery is said to relax the Liver. (And there are more recommendations but that's a whole new article)

In conclusion, using a cosmetic acupuncture procedure allows you to see your patient's faces up close through the series of treatments, make proper adjustments to your acupuncture point prescription and/or herbal recommendations, and resolve additional internal issues.

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