TCM Five Phases Chart and Safety Checklist

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1. The five phases (wu xing): traditional correspondences

Phase	Organs (TCM)	Season	Color	Emotion	Direction
Wood	Liver, gallbladder	Spring	Green	Anger	East
Fire	Heart, small intestine	Summer	Red	Joy	South
Earth	Spleen, stomach	Late summer	Yellow	Worry	Center
Metal	Lung, large intestine	Autumn	White	Grief	West
Water	Kidney, bladder	Winter	Black	Fear	North

Generating cycle: Wood feeds Fire, Fire makes Earth (ash), Earth yields Metal, Metal collects Water, Water nourishes Wood.

Controlling cycle: Wood restrains Earth, Earth restrains Water, Water restrains Fire, Fire restrains Metal, Metal restrains Wood.

2. Before acupuncture or cupping, ask

[ ] Are you licensed in this state? Do you hold NCCAOM certification?

[ ] Do you use sterile, single-use needles, opened in front of me? [ ] Are cups cleaned and sterilized between clients?

[ ] I told you if I am pregnant, take blood thinners, or have a bleeding disorder, skin condition or weak immunity.

3. Before any Chinese herbal product, check

[ ] My doctor and pharmacist know about it, and about every medicine I take.

[ ] The label lists every ingredient by its Latin botanical name. [ ] It comes from a known, reputable source.

[ ] I am not pregnant or breastfeeding, and it is not for a child, unless a doctor has agreed.

[ ] I take blood thinners, diabetes or blood pressure medicine, or steroids, and have asked about interactions.

4. Never buy or use

[ ] Anything listing Aristolochia, guang fang ji, birthwort or aristolochic acid (kidney failure, urinary cancers: NCI).

[ ] Ephedra or ma huang supplements (banned by the FDA in 2004: heart attack, stroke, seizures).

[ ] Unlabeled herbs, or products promising to cure a disease.

5. Stop and get medical care if

A new symptom appears after starting a herb (rash, yellow skin or eyes, dark urine, racing heart, swelling), or a needle or cupping site becomes red, hot, swollen or painful. In an emergency, call your local emergency number.

Evidence summary (NCCIH): acupuncture may help some chronic pain; tai chi may reduce falls and help knee osteoarthritis; Chinese herbal studies are mostly poor quality. TCM should not replace or delay medical care.