

*The article describes the essence of Thai Traditional Medicine. The theory of basic elements and symptoms of their balance/imbalance - excessiveness, weaknesses and deficiency. There is also a description of remedies and basic tastes for dosha analysis. Written in English, with influence from Thai syntax and grammar.*

## **Introduction to traditional Thai Medicine**

Submitted by Kelly Bornt-Kidson, original Thailand source unknown

Human life is a combination of body and emotion. The four essential elements of the body are earth, water, wind and fire. Poor health is a result of imbalance among these elements together with a lack of harmony between the patient, his circumstances in life and the world around him.

The Earth element represents structural organs of the body: hair, nails, teeth, skin, brain, muscles, tendons, bone, bones, marrow, spleen, heart, liver, ligaments, kidneys, lungs, intestines, digested food and absorbed food together with waste product.

The Water element represents all liquids, phlegm and semi-solids in the body: blood, bile, sputum, pus, sweat, thick fat, oily fat, tears, saliva, nostril fluid, urine and joint fluid.

The Wind element means the energy that controls movement in the body: upward wind, downward wind, abdominal wind, wind in the bowels, wind in blood circulation, wind penetrating all over the body and breath.

The Fire element represents vital heat energy that makes the body warm, heat-up or burn, fire to warm the body, fire that causes anxiety, fire that causes aging, and fire for digestion.

Disease develops from an imbalance of these elements. The imbalance is classified into three degrees: excess, weakness, and deficiency.

See the chart on the following page:

<b>Element Sample</b>	<b>Balance</b>	<b>Excessive</b>	<b>Weakness</b>	<b>Deficiency</b>
Earth/muscle	Normal movement of the body	Cramps, stress	Weak, no elasticity convulsion	Inflammation, painful feeling, bruise, spasm, fatigue, atrophy and paralysis
Water/saliva	Soothe the mouth; normal speech, chewing and swallowing; digest starch to sugar	Too much saliva in the mouth, dripping saliva	Thick saliva, hard to speak, chew and swallow	Dry, painful, bloody mouth, bad smell, dry teeth and throat, thirsty
Wind/ wind in the blood circulation	Normal blood circulation	High blood pressure, headache	Low blood pressure, fatigue, fainting	Circulatory failure, unconsciousness, paralysis
Fire/ fire that causes aging	Makes tissue deteriorate in normal rate	Faster deterioration of cells and organs	Lower rate of deterioration, results such as thicker skin, thick tongue	Bleeding and circulatory problems; blood vessel constriction, brain atrophy, heart failure. Can sometimes cause death.

### The Etiology of disease

As it has been written that most illnesses arise from prolonged problems in diet, lack of exercise, etc., the factors influencing the elemental imbalance are:

1. **eating habit:** too much, not enough or bad quality of food and water, etc..
2. **imbalance action and work:** overloaded working, standing or sitting for a long period of time, restlessness, sleep disorder, too long urinary and feces retention, etc.;
3. **environment and climate:** rapid change of temperature, pollution, etc and
4. **emotions:** sadness, depression, anger, rage etc.

### Principle of the art of traditional compounding

The remedies used for ill-health are made from plants, animals or minerals. Each formula composes of many drugs which can be divided into 4 groups:

1. main ingredients to exert the main action;
2. auxiliary drugs to support the main ingredients keep balance of the four elements and restore the health;
3. controlling drugs to control the action and sometimes toxicity of the main ingredients; and
4. coloring and flavoring agents to make the whole formula more palatable.

Traditional herbalists usually possess distinct knowledge of the history of the natural ingredients. They must understand clearly about the name, appearance, color, odor and taste. They also must have the knowledge of tastes and properties which are divided into 2 categories;

#### 1. *Rot prathaan* (chief tastes of the whole remedy); cold, hot and gentle.

Taste of the remedy	Remedy contains these as main ingredients	Remedy
Cold	Leaves, flowers, stamens, heated drug to charcoal, etc	Fever, toxic substances, etc
Hot	Peppers, Ginger, Galangal, etc	Flatulence, constipation, etc
Gentle	<i>Kot Thang Ha</i> (Selinum, Artemisia, Angelica, Lovage and Atractylis), <i>Thian Thang Haa</i> (Cumin, Black cumin, Garden cress seed, Fennel and Caraway), Cinnamon, etc	Fainting, blood disease, etc

**2. *Yaa Kao Rot* (the nine tastes in drugs): astringent, sweet, nauseating, bitter, nutty, fragrant, salty, sour and pungent.**

<b>Taste of Yaa</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Incompatibilities</b>
astringent	Diarrhea, wound healing, stomachic	Cough, constipation, flatulence, thirst
sweet	Skin refresher, muscle tonic, cardiac tonic, demulcent, thirst	Diabetes mellitus, skin diseases, carries
nauseating	Detoxificant, skin diseases, insect bites, depressant	Cardiac disease, cough
bitter	Blood and bile tonic, antipyretic, tonic, stimulate appetite	Flatulence
nutty	Deficiency of tendon, tonic for joint fluid, tonic	Asthma, cough with sputum, fever, thirst
fragrant	Heart, liver and lung tonic, tonic for pregnant women, relieve thirst	Flatulence
salty	Laxative, eliminate fatty substances from the intestine, blood purified, soften the sputum	Flatulence
sour	Cough with sputum, blood purified, relieve thirst	Fever, diarrhea
pungent	Carminative, fire element tonic, anti-flatulent, promote sweating	Fever, inflammation of the eyes.

Differing from modern medicine, traditional Thai medicine is not limited to relieving or curing symptoms; it also aims to restore the body's normal function, so that it can heal itself. This is an alternative medicine for everyone.