

Perspectives on Aging From Contemporary Western Medicine to Traditional Chinese Medicine: Why It Happens and How to Slow It Down

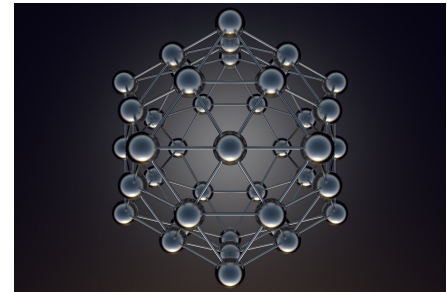
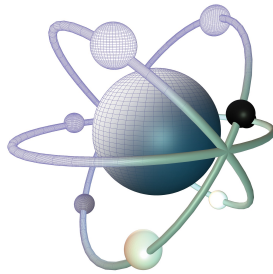
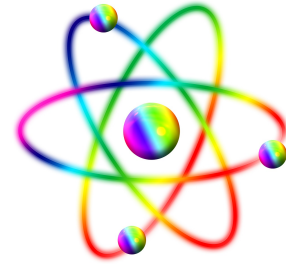
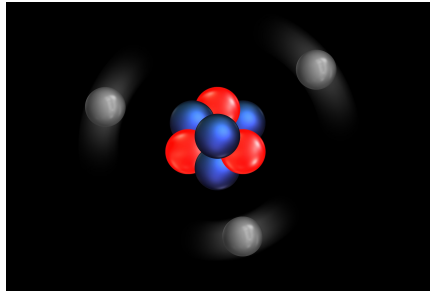


The Western Medicine View

Science has studied the phenomenon of aging for generations. It can describe in great detail what it believes through observation is the cause and impetus for aging but there is no official and fully endorsed theory on aging.

“You can free yourself from aging by reinterpreting your body and by grasping the link between belief and biology.”

– Deepak Chopra



A number of theories exist which are periodically updated indicating that we do not for certain know the truth about aging. Nevertheless, one theory enjoys a great deal of support at the moment which is that aging is, at least in large part, caused by oxidation stress to the body's cells resulting from the presence of a significant enough amount of free radicals in the body's system. Although this theory does not completely explain aging, it is seen as an important factor.

Free radicals are molecules whose atoms have an unstable amount of electrons. The electrons' outer orbit have not reached or maintained the specific number of electrons that ensures stability to the cell. It follows that the atom will attempt to either combine with other atoms in an attempt to create stability or it will steal electrons from other molecules which are already stable. The molecule that loses an electron, in turn, becomes unstable and behaves as a free radical consequently attacking other molecules.

This phenomenon cascades into a chain reaction that becomes destructive to cell tissues. Since cells are fed and eliminate waste through their cell walls by osmosis, when the wall is damaged the cell is neither properly nourished nor capable of eliminating properly. This leads to the creation of unhealthy tissues and organs.

Oxidation stress caused by free radicals is a part of the aging process and eventual death of the body.

The formation of free radicals naturally occurs as part of our normal metabolism, but under normal conditions in a healthy body there are enough antioxidants to mitigate the start of a chain reaction of free radical production.

Antioxidants come principally from fruits and vegetables which are rich in vitamins E and C. To ensure we get the proper intake of antioxidants supplements can be helpful if they are of good quality, but nothing beats the consumption of wholesome organic fruits and vegetables.

(Many PHYTO5 skincare products contain antioxidants to help with the reversal of the signs of aging of the skin.)

The Five Phases of the Aging Process According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

In addition to genetic influence, effects of lifestyle, and natural cell aging, energy medicine recognizes other factors of an unseen energetic nature that may explain aging. Some are common to all of us, and some others are specific to each one of us.

Understanding the energetic influences specific to you can help anticipate the likely direction of your particular aging process.

The Five Element Theory is also called the Five Phases Theory and for good reasons. The five phases of TCM are Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water.

First, we are under the influence of the “energetic seasons” throughout our entire lives. In addition to the four seasons, the Chinese have what effectively constitutes a fifth season called the Earth season. It is the transition time between each season, and it

happens four times a year. Second, from birth to death, we move through five distinct phases of life.

Based on an average lifespan of seventy five years, TCM indicates that we spend approximately fifteen years in each phase, starting with Wood, then moving into Fire, Earth, Metal and Water. For example, from age 45 to 60 we are under the influence of Metal. It might be



necessary to increase the length of time spent in each phase by two to five years to reflect the present day average lifespan, therefore we would say that from the late 40s to early 60s we are under the influence of the energy of Metal. From mid-50s on we are under the influence of Water energy.

Youth is associated with the energy of [Wood](#) (Spring) as it is the time of rising yang that drives the growth of the body. It's also when the skin is likely to reflect an imbalance of the Wood condition, namely, excessive oiliness and blackheads.

Eventually, those who are not the Wood type work themselves out of the natural manifestations typical to Wood as they enter into the [Fire](#) phase of life for another fifteen to twenty years. On the other hand, those who are Wood types will have a tendency to continue to express the Wood conditions throughout the rest of their lives. This is the pattern for all dominating energies defined as the energy of the biorhythm of their year of birth.

Fire is the time of young adulthood while [Earth](#) is the time of more mature adults. It's only a matter of time before we experience the energy of the elements that mark the most visible phases of the aging process—[Metal](#) and [Water](#).

Water, the energy of Winter, is the peak of yin energy. It's the fifth and last of the five fifteen-(or-so)-year phases. It starts in the early 60s. It influences body shape while it

increases the tendency to stiffen and to dehydrate causing loss of skin tone. There also tends to be a loss of collagen since yang energy is at its lowest point.

To add to this, there are also various energetic effects we experience from January through December every year as we move through what we call the five energetic seasons. Each of the five energetic seasons aligns with one of the five elements mentioned above along with, among other things, a set of skin conditions, a basic emotion, internal organs, a fluid circulation, etc. Each season, like each element or aspect, has a specific energetic influence on all humans, animals, and plants.

We see that we are subjected to several layers of energetic influences—from those of the energetic seasons to the phases of our life span. In addition, there is the energy of the moment in which we were born which we call our personal energetic biorhythm, particularly, the energies of the year and of the month of birth. In theory, the biorhythm should go all the way to the day, the hour, and the minute of our birth, as each one imparted its own level of energetic influence with an impact that can remain with us all our lives.

As we age, we are subjected to a myriad of energetic influences from our biorhythm, the effects of the energetic seasons and fifteen-year phases of our life span and also from the lifestyle choices we make and hereditary factors. All these aspects bear, to some extent, on our health, body shape, and skin conditions.

Brake and Accelerator

The Five Element (or Phase) Theory teaches us that each one of the five elements (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water) is both the accelerator of the next element on the Construction Cycle and the brake or controlling influence over a third energy as part of its role in the Restraining Cycle. Each one of the five energies has a direct effect on two others. Each one of them, in turn, affects two more.

The Construction Cycle goes from Wood to Fire, to Earth, to Metal and to Water.

The Restraining Cycle goes from Wood to Earth, to Water, to Fire, to Metal and again to Wood.

An energetic imbalance can originate from any one of the five elements (aspects) of [vital energy](#). It can be an instance of either insufficient or overbearing energy. In both cases, it first affects the functions directly dependent on that specific energy and secondly, it affects two other elements and their respective energy: 1) the one it is intended to accelerate (in the Creation/Construction Cycle), and 2) the one it is intended to brake (in the Control/Restraining Cycle).

For example, weak Metal means poor Metal functions of oxygenation and mineralization. It affects the activity of its yin and yang organs, the lungs and large intestine, respectively, and of its fluid–venous circulation (blue blood). It will be a poor accelerator of Water energy and its functions and an insufficient brake on Wood and its functions.

Overbearing Metal, on the other hand, limits Wood energy by being too strong a brake on Wood while being too strong an accelerator of Water.

We can easily see that any unbalanced aspect of energy allowed to persist over a period of time has the potential to initiate a vicious detrimental influence on all the five elements (or components) of vital energy. It deteriorates the flow and quality of vital energy causing cascading ailments.

The Individual Aging Cycle

The Five Element Theory and its two cycles of acceleration and braking can help us gain a new perspective on the aging process.

According to TCM, all humans from birth on to the end of the first phase are under the energy of Wood. Then each phase follows along the Construction Cycle, but our



individual biorhythm—mainly the energy of our year of birth—triggers a parallel influence that follows the sequence of fifteen year phases following the Restraining Cycle. The starting point of the sequence is the element of our biorhythm.

If a person is born in a [Fire](#) year, the energy of Fire will be influential through the first fifteen years of the

individual's life. Of course, this is in addition to the Wood energy that drives growth as it does for everyone, but while the body follows the growth pattern dictated by the Construction Cycle, as we age, another set of energetic influences—starting with the energy of our year of birth—follows the fifteen-year phases along the Restraining Cycle.

For example, for a person born in a Fire year, the sequence of fifteen-year cycles will run from Fire to Metal, then to Wood, to Earth, and finally to Water.

In this example, as the individual gets to his or her early 60s, he or she experiences a double dose of Water influence—from both the Construction Cycle and the Restraining Cycle—as Water is the fifth phase of the cycle starting with Fire.

For this particular individual, wrinkles and loss of tone will be pronounced from age 60 on. For another individual, it could have been the Fire energy coexisting with the [Water](#) years. In such a case, redness and skin sensitivity from Fire might become an additional factor on top of the Water condition.

For the first thirty years of age, the energetic emphasis is from the Construction Cycle responsible for the maturation of the body. Beyond that age, the Restraining Cycle becomes more influential.

Over the years, energetic decline becomes more pronounced, increasing the likelihood of vital energy imbalance and its consequences on our health. For this reason, regular vital energy balancing products and spa treatments are important.

(The intent of PHYTO5 energetic products and treatments is to maintain [vital energy](#) balance.)

Role and Importance of the Biorhythm

To know our biorhythm is helpful. With this information we can better anticipate the likely direction of our aging process with its effects on our skin and body shape. We can also begin to mitigate its effects as early as possible. If you are working with a PHYTO5 trained professional, biorhythm information also helps the technician select and personalize the most desirable treatments for you and to prescribe the most appropriate skincare products for you.

Knowledge of your dominating energy explains certain factors affecting your present state of wellness as well as anticipate its future evolution. It can also help you to make other adjustments concerning your lifestyle and habits.

For example, a Fire type person is more affected by the midsummer day heat than anyone else and should be careful in warm climates if playing a sport outdoors at midday. This person would be stressing the heart with strongly accelerated red blood circulation manifested as a very red face, excessive perspiration, and a likely increase in skin sensitivity.

The proper response is a [PHYTO5 Fire element facial](#) with a Fire energetic [drainage](#). A Fire element bath after such exposure to the sun and heat would be very cooling and calming as well.

An aging [Metal](#) person naturally loses more minerals than other people and can suffer from poor oxygenation of tissues. It is smart to use the PHYTO5 Metal line to restore

essential minerals to help replenish the natural hydration process within the tissues. Eventually, as the [Water](#) phase appears, the Water condition (wrinkles and lack of tone) will be aggravated by the Metal's insufficiency of minerals. Regular application of trace minerals with [PHYTO5's Oligo 5](#) mineral salt mist is recommended.

Each element has its own energies causing specific skin conditions and body shapes. Manifestations of these conditions are either temporary or they can become more permanent if they are also a condition of our dominating element. They become magnified as we age and when we do nothing to compensate for the imbalances we experience by receiving energy balancing treatments.

Understanding the energetic forces at work behind our biorhythm becomes a powerful tool in creating an appropriate and personalized response to the premature effects of the aging process and any particularly vexing skin condition or body shape.

This energetic TCM-based solution to easing and slowing down the aging process is intended to help us live at an optimum level for our individual energetic make-up. Conceptually, the solution is always the same but it must be adapted according to the energetic tendencies of each individual as defined by their age and biorhythm.

The tools for addressing and decelerating the aging process are many—from skincare to all aspects of our lifestyle. The more comprehensive and integrated we make our strategy, the more likely we will succeed.

Fully-trained PHYTO5 therapists are able to effectively offer this understanding to anyone eager to remain active, and looking and feeling good with an improved sense of well-being.

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by Jon Canas, President, PHYTO Distribution, Inc.

2575 Kurt St., Eustis, FL 32726

352-483-4800; 1-888-715-8008

<https://www.phyto5pro.us>

<https://www.phyto5.us>

<https://www.agelesslacure.com>

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Jon Canas is also author of the book *Energetic Skincare, Naturally*. He has written over a dozen trade articles and is a contributing author to *Milady's Advanced Esthetics* textbook.