

# NOURISH THE EARTH ELEMENT FOR HEALTHY DIGESTION

Traditional Chinese Medicine rests on a framework of five elements: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water. According to the Five Element Theory, all living things – and the world at large – are comprised of these basic elements.

A balance of these five elements in the body promotes good health. Each element is associated with specific meridians and organs. The Stomach and Spleen are represented by the Earth element; therefore, supporting the balance of one's Earth element can support digestion and gut health.

The following suggestions may be helpful for balancing your Earth element:

**1 Eat meals on a regular schedule.**

Eating erratically – whether it's due to skipping meals because you don't have time or picking at food all day – upsets the Earth element. Creating a structure or a set time of day to stop and eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner can nourish the Earth element. This doesn't have to be rigid – the goal is to aim for consistency. Planning ahead, meal prepping, sticky notes, and calendar reminders are all great ways to bring more structure to meals.

**2 Encourage small portion sizes.**

The Earth element likes balance – it doesn't want all or nothing. To nourish the Earth element, eat until you're satisfied, not full. If you're also working toward eating regularly scheduled meals, you can eat mindfully with the confidence of knowing when you'll have your next meal – so you don't have to load up on food to tide yourself over for a long period of time.

**3 Create a calm environment for meals.**

The Earth element is nourished when meals are treated as a sacred ritual. Eating while driving, working, watching TV, or running errands, for example, all work against the Earth element. When it's time to eat, the focus should be on the food and nothing else. This is something we all know, yet it can be so hard to implement!

**4 Avoid a diet that consists mainly of cold and uncooked foods.**

These types of foods can aggravate the Earth element. Warm and cooked foods are believed to nourish the Earth element.

**5 Incorporate just the right amount of natural sweetness into meals.**

This can be done by adding fruit or sweet vegetables, like yams and carrots, into meals. Veggies that are orange and yellow in color tend to be sweet. Grains, almonds, and coconut are also considered sweet. The Earth element loves sweet foods, but too much isn't good either.

**6 Spend time in the garden and kitchen.**

Both gardening and cooking are nourishing activities that connect us to the earth and the Earth element. Anything that connects us to the ground or harvest builds the Earth element. Being closely involved in food preparation also helps us prime our digestion through activating our senses and digestive juices

A balanced Earth element is thought to promote kindness, stability, and reliability. Individuals with a strong Earth element tend to be grounded. The Earth element rules digestion, which according to Traditional Chinese Medicine, also favors routine and stability. When the Earth is treated well, it bears fruit and nourishment.

When the Earth element is out of balance, an individual can become creatively blocked, and digestion can be compromised. An imbalanced Earth element can lead to over-nourishing, both emotionally and physically.

 **What steps can you take to nourish and balance your Earth element?**