

**Squandering energy** As adults, we learn to use our energy effectively. We recognize when we are tired, and act accordingly. Babies and young children have not yet learned to economize, and sometimes seem to “squander” their energy. For example, they rush around even when they are extremely tired, seemingly unable to calm down. When this happens, as parents we may be quickly overcome with anger. It may help to remember that the reason for this initially violent emotion is that the child is taking and using the parent’s energy, and throwing that away, too.

### Energy patterns and emotions

Emotions play an important part in directing the flow of energy. At the basic level, the so-called “positive” emotions such as joy and enthusiasm tend to increase the amount and flow of energy, while “negative” emotions like depression, apathy and fear decrease its quantity and flow.

**Energy and emotions in disease** When we fall ill and energy flow in the body is disturbed, we are also likely to be overwhelmed by negative emotions which are difficult to throw off. When using natural medicines, it is important to take account of the emotions gripping an ill child. The correct choice of remedy can disperse negative emotions – the pattern of energy flow then changes, and the child soon starts to recover.

Actions also help. When parents nurse their sick child, they often feel instinctively that they want to cuddle and sing softly, be in comfortable and restful surroundings, provide toys and treats, and so

on. These actions are aimed at creating a warm, positive atmosphere, which will disperse negative thoughts as well as helping to supplement the child’s energy supplies.

### Parental emotions and the child

The link between parent and child is very strong, and a baby or child easily picks up a parent’s feelings. If you feel grumpy, so too will your child. When tension between parents runs high, the emotional effect on the child can be so strong as to disturb energy flow and cause illness. Many cases of asthma in children (page 104) have been traced back to great tension between the parents. In some instances, parents have been considering a separation, but have not told their children. However, the children have subconsciously detected the tension, which then manifested itself as asthma.

Children may even pick up or “borrow” diseases from their parents. For example, one child with asthma did not respond to any treatments. After some time it was discovered that the mother had a severe lung condition, which she had not revealed. She decided to take treatment herself, and as her condition improved, so did her child’s asthma. In the words of an old Chinese saying: “Treat the mother to treat the child.”

# BUILDING A HEALTHY CONSTITUTION

## Before birth

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The most important time for building a healthy constitution is before birth. A child's basic constitution and overall level of energy are formed in the early months of pregnancy. The baby in the womb draws nourishment from the mother, and is especially sensitive to the health and energy of the parents.

In Chinese medicine, it is acknowledged that the basic hereditary characteristics are determined at the moment of conception, but that events which happen to the pregnant mother can affect her unborn child. Some of the commoner events are listed below. If you recognize the described pattern in your child, consult the relevant pages, or visit a practitioner of natural medicine. There is often much that can be done.

**Fright** If a mother undergoes a traumatic experience such as a scare or fright during the last four months of pregnancy, this can be passed on to the baby, who is then born with symptoms of fear (the "fright" pattern, page 84). Such babies are commonly very nervous, have difficulty sleeping, and are frightened when away from their mother. There is often a slight blue coloration between the eyes.

**Heat** Sometimes a mother becomes especially hot during the later stages of pregnancy – for example, if she carries her baby during a very hot summer, or if she eats too many "heating" foods (page 32) such as curry or game. The heat that she experiences can then cause an imbalance in the baby, who tends to be too hot and red-faced, and also shows a readiness to perspiration.

**Toxins** A mother who experiences high levels of certain toxins (harmful substances) during pregnancy can pass on the effects to her baby. Such toxins include lead from vehicle exhaust fumes and nicotine from tobacco smoke. Nicotine may cause poor growth in the womb so that the baby has a low birth weight, and also a tendency towards tonsillitis and swollen glands during childhood. In Chinese medicine, oranges are considered particularly bad for pregnant mothers, since eating too many oranges can lead to an over-active baby (page 164).

There are also toxins which are well known to cause developmental problems, such as alcohol and certain drugs and medicines.

**Maternal illness** If a woman is ill just before conceiving, or at any time during the pregnancy, the imbalance so created can be passed on to her baby. For example, if she contracts hepatitis during pregnancy, her baby may well be born with a poorly-functioning liver and thus have difficulties with digestion (page 23).

## Birth problems

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The moment when a baby comes into the world is of great importance – and of great mystery. Anything that helps to ease the transition from the womb to the outside world is worthwhile. When problems occur at birth, the baby can be adversely affected. For example, a baby born well before term may have a "weak" energy pattern (page 21).

Likewise, in a difficult or traumatic birth, the baby may have weak energy. In a few cases the baby shows the "fright" pattern (page 84).