

Allergies and the San Jiao

By Heidi Hawkins, MAc, LAc

The *san jiao* is classified as an organ in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). The *san jiao* is unknown outside of TCM. *San jiao* is often translated as "triple heater," "triple burner" or "triple warmer."

Unfortunately, these translations shed little light on what the *san jiao* is or what it does.

As a medical intuitive, I have learned to observe the functions and failures of the *san jiao*, and have come up with a way of conceptualizing it that seems to work well for my clients.

As TCM textbooks explain, the *san jiao* is comprised of three compartments in the trunk of the body. The upper compartment is the chest, from the diaphragm up. The middle compartment is from the diaphragm to the navel. The lower compartment is in the abdomen, from the navel down. Each compartment is a metabolic center.

The *san jiao* primarily metabolizes fluids. The best way I have found to visualize the functional aspect of the *san jiao* is as a water wheel in the center of each of the three compartments. The water wheel should spin clockwise, so it would look like a clock to someone facing the person.

The three water wheels should all work together harmoniously, all spinning at the same rate, the same size, and all made of the same materials. They should all be in good condition, clean, and spin smoothly.

Visualizing them in this way is a form of medical *qigong*, and is beneficial to health in general. When doing this visualization, it is best to start with the lowest water wheel and work your way up. The fluids a person takes in through drinking flow into the top water wheel, then to the middle, and then to the lowest one. From there, the turbid fluids and toxins should be washed into the urinary bladder for excretion. The clean fluids should be recycled as a mist that rises up on the right side of the body, then flows down the left.

The kidneys power the lowest water wheel. The spleen powers the middle water wheel. All metabolic functions are ultimately powered by the spleen, as part of the spleen's transformation and transportation

functions. The lungs power the upper water wheel. The kidneys get their power from inherited or genetic *qi*. The spleen gets power from food. The lungs get power from the air. "Power" is another word for *qi*. If there is a problem with one of the water wheels, it is usually either bogged down in gunk (phlegm, toxin, stagnant food, etc.), or it is lacking in *qi* because of problems with the spleen or the associated organ.

People with allergies invariably have problems in the *san jiao*. Usually, phlegm is plugging things up, with deficiencies of *qi* in the related organs as well. Treating the spleen is always important where phlegm impairment is concerned, but the *san jiao* must also be attended to. The *san jiao* can harmonize the fluids of all the other organs, and keep them clean. The *san jiao* also maintains the cerebral spinal fluid and the lymph system, coordinating the cleansing and fluid circulation of the whole body.

A body that is clogged up with phlegm and toxins is extremely susceptible to allergies, as well as various forms of cancer; thyroid problems; multiple sclerosis; and all types of immune disorders. Maintaining a healthy *san jiao* can make a big difference in health in general, and allergies in particular. The *san jiao* can be healed and maintained through *qigong*, acupuncture, herbal medicine, and other TCM modalities.

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