

YIN YANG BALANCE FOR MENOPAUSE

The Korean Tradition
of Sasang Medicine

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Healing Arts Press
Rochester, Vermont



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Foreword

By Ann Louise Gittleman, Ph.D., CNS

The truth is, no one-size-fits-all menopause plan works for everyone. But there is a custom-tailored program that meets your body's special needs, and it is masterfully laid out in Dr. Gary Wagman's *Yin Yang Balance for Menopause: The Korean Tradition of Sasang Medicine*.

Having written several menopause books and gone through "The Change" myself, I only wish I had had Dr. Wagman's priceless resource at my fingertips. He tackles menopausal myths, the most common menopausal symptoms, and current health challenges with the most balanced and individualized solutions for each one based upon four distinct body types. The beauty of his work lies in the realization that every one of us comes into this world with unique physical and emotional strengths and weaknesses. Figuring out your personal body type allows you to make more appropriate diet, supplement, herb, and exercise choices not just during menopause but also for the rest of your life. Based on the Korean Sasang medical system, identifying personal body type is a powerful tool in helping to treat hot flashes, loss of libido, and weight gain as well as dealing with more serious challenges like osteoporosis, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

I am particularly struck by Dr. Wagman's insightful knowledge of the underappreciated impact of emotions on physical well-being and structural issues. His description of a client with frozen shoulder syndrome—which he connects with the emotion of grief (connected to

the lung meridian)—spoke to me personally, having experienced great sorrow after my father’s death and an immobile shoulder since then. Gems like that make this book one you will want to read over and over again.

Not only are the menopausal years a time when we endure power surges—otherwise known as hot flashes—and other changes in our bodies, they are also a time when many of us truly come into our own. I encourage everyone to use this book as a body, mind, and spirit guide to all with menopausal and aging concerns. Dr. Wagman’s understanding of herbal medicine and its application is particularly extraordinary.

It is my hope that this book will empower women from adolescence to the menopausal transition to continue the self-health and self-improvement movement that has changed the way we view and now treat menopause. Attention to proper diet, exercise, lifestyle changes, and what the body is actually telling us will make the journey into midlife a time of great freedom and renewed energy. The postmenopausal years should be the time of a woman’s life free of child rearing and responsibilities that is rewarded with nothing but good health. As Margaret Meade put it, “The most creative force in the world is a menopausal woman with zest!” Certainly keeping our bodies in biochemical balance is a lifetime adventure that will ensure our passage through each stage of life is filled with zest. The time to repair is now, and with Dr. Wagman’s expert advice by our side we can’t help but sail through menopause and into a second spring.

ANN LOUISE GITTLEMAN, PH.D., CNS, is a New York Times bestselling author of more than thirty books on diet, detox, the environment, and women’s health. Beloved by many, she is regarded as a nutritional visionary and health pioneer who has fearlessly stood on the front lines of holistic and integrative medicine. A Columbia University graduate, Gittleman has been recognized as one of the top ten nutritionists in the country by *Self* magazine and has received the American Medical Writers Association award for excellence and the Humanitarian Award from the Cancer Control Society.



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Setting Sail

The Basics of Menopause and Sasang Medicine

Why do some women serenely sail through menopause while others seem to suffer through every symptom? Why does Brook, who is in great physical shape, suffer from hot flashes and insomnia, while Cindy, who does not exercise and eats everything in sight, makes menopause look easy? Shouldn't optimum physical and emotional health guarantee a smooth transition? For many women, menopausal symptoms are unpredictable, often catching them off guard. While the female body has been transitioning through menopause since the beginning of humankind, the menopausal experience varies according to the individual.

MENOPAUSE AND YOUR BODY TYPE

Because innate emotional and physical strengths and weaknesses influence how a woman reacts to menopause, every woman responds to the menopause transition in her own unique way. Discovering your body type can help you identify your strengths and weaknesses, and making modifications according to your type can help you adapt to hormonal changes within your body and within your environment.

Even though some women are born healthier or take better care of

themselves than others, health alone does not account for the differences described above. I've seen numerous patients who are otherwise in great physical and emotional shape experience intense hot flashes, fatigue, insomnia, and/or depression. These individuals often explain how, out of the blue, emotions start to spiral out of control, or sweat pours from their skin for no apparent reason. Trying our best to stay healthy can make any change in life relatively easier, but sometimes this just isn't enough to ensure a smooth transition.

There is no "secret" to optimizing your menopausal health and ensuring that you'll be symptom-free, but there are effective ways to help you navigate your way through the choppy waters. You are about to embark on a journey of self-discovery in which a deeper understanding of your emotional and physical strengths and weaknesses unfolds. Through this discovery comes the ability to control how your mind and body feel at any given moment.

Yin Yang Balance for Menopause emphasizes the ability to address menopausal issues naturally, by balancing your mind and body. It does not offer ways to increase your estrogen or progesterone or ensure a symptom-free menopause; rather, it guides you through the process of balancing the hormones already within you and provides the tools necessary to recognize and address changes along the way. This book isn't designed as an alternative to hormone treatment or as a companion to it. Instead, it focuses on optimizing emotional and physical health, whether you are receiving hormone treatment or not.

With the introduction of a four-body-type system, the Sasang medical approach offers insight into why and how your menopausal journey is the way it is. It explains why hot flashes occur when they do, why insomnia is suddenly an issue, or why depression has taken over. As the upcoming pages unfold, you'll discover the different psychological and physiological aspects of each body type and how they affect the menopausal transition and learn about body-type-specific foods, herbs, and exercises.

WHAT EXACTLY IS MENOPAUSE?

The quick answer to the above question is in the name: *meno* is Latin for "menses" and *pause* refers to a cessation. Yet there is nothing "quick"

about menopause, since it is a process that takes up to seven years as the body's yin energy, in the form of estrogen, starts to decline, potentially causing physiological and psychological changes along the way. Officially, however, it occurs after a woman's monthly cycle has been absent for twelve months, and it cannot be explained by other health issues.

In Sasang medicine, health is dependent on the ability to adapt to our surroundings by harmonizing our inner environment, which is influenced by the relative strength of our organ energies. During the menopausal transition, our stronger and weaker organs have to reassess their relationship, just as marriage asks us to do every now and then to keep love alive. This relationship is tested every seven years for women and every eight years for men during a time when the body's circadian clock resets its rhythm. Menopause is considered the seventh of seven (7×7) phases, and at age forty-nine, a female undergoes the most significant change in her lifetime—the closing of one door and opening of another.

In the East, this is viewed as a “year of renewal,” which is in stark contrast to the predominant Western idea that menopause is simply another step closer to death as the body loses its precious hormones and their ability to support our biological functions. In the East, life is not interpreted as a linear process from birth to death but rather as a continuous cycle in which the death of one phase brings life to a new one. The Sasang approach is not based on artificially reversing the aging process but on balancing and adapting harmoniously to each of life's phases.

Accordingly, menopause is an opportunity to reignite one's passion for life, as the time and energy devoted to producing and then raising a newborn is transferred into energy to *be* reborn and discover oneself anew. As with most cultures, seven signifies rest and rejuvenation. In Chinese culture, it signifies the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. The seventh day of the week, for example, is an opportunity to recharge and gear oneself up for the following week. Hence seven multiplied by seven is a significant time in a woman's life when she can take a step back and reevaluate, rediscover what is precious, and shed unnecessary fears and unhealthy thoughts. It is an opportunity to reflect on and distinguish between what is precious and what is expendable.

Menopause is often blamed for the anguish women may feel dur-

ing an intense time in life when their nest is emptied, their parents are getting older or have passed away, they no longer have a day job, and/or they are left to grope their way through all of this without anyone to guide them. But keep in mind that, as I just mentioned, it is all about adjusting, and the guide you need in such times is nowhere else but within you. Yet simply telling yourself that everything is going to be all right usually doesn't cut it when you are in the midst of a hot flash or experiencing emotional ups and downs. Adjustment requires deep insight into your situation and the ability to detect why you react the way you do. The Sasang approach goes beyond the image of menopause as a roller coaster of fluctuating hormones and delineates how women react and adjust in different ways depending on their innate strengths and weaknesses.

WHAT IS SASANG MEDICINE?

The Korean word *sasang* means “four types” in English and signifies the classification of all people into four major body types. This medical system was first established by a Korean doctor named Lee Je-ma (1837–1900), who was well versed in the Eastern medical tradition, which is a system that focuses on the balance of yin and yang energy to treat emotional and/or physical illness. He was distraught from seeing that certain patients suffering from the same symptoms improved quickly, while others suffered longer despite adequate treatment. Sasang medicine was born from his ability to cater to these differences while emphasizing the unique constitutional requirements of each patient.

As previously mentioned, the Sasang medical system is based on the idea that each individual is born with varying emotional and physical strengths and weaknesses depending on his/her body type. These tendencies have a direct influence on how we react to the external world and our body's internal environment. It holds that the hormonal changes and fluctuating energies that a woman experiences during menopause aren't what make her feel this way or that; rather, it is a woman's *response* to these changes that dictates how she feels. For instance, it is easy to claim that depression is caused by a drop in estrogen and relative excess of progesterone. Actually, depression is an

inability to adapt to these changes. How do we know this? Because, to put it simply, not everyone who experiences these changes in hormone levels is depressed!

According to Sasang medicine, our response to life's changes highly depends on how we relate to our own innate emotional and physical strengths and weaknesses. A child with anger issues may eventually learn how to curb that anger. An individual with an introverted nature may choose to interact with others more often rather than feel alone. We do not have to be experts in Sasang medicine to recognize, strengthen, and modify these traits. Yet these innate strengths and weaknesses are often difficult to detect, and even if we do detect them, it may be difficult to know how to proceed in handling them. We all have unique but untapped strengths that are hidden within, awaiting an opportunity to come out. Yet other traits, which often manifest too easily, require modification, restructuring, or disregarding, especially when we are experiencing difficulties or going through a vulnerable time in life. Menopause may be the perfect excuse for emotions like anger and sadness to appear. It may also unlock the door for excessive heat or stored emotions to find their way to the surface. When accumulated energy within works its way outward, you need to be prepared or else be in for a rude awakening!

Yin Yang Balance for Menopause is a key that unlocks your greatest potential by facilitating deeper insight and giving you the tools to modify your unique body-type-specific strengths and weaknesses.

After getting to know the Sasang approach, you'll be able to do the following:

- Avoid the emotional ups and downs of menopause and strengthen your inner self.
- Recognize your innate strengths and weaknesses and make the most of "now."
- Make wiser choices about which foods to eat for an easier transition through menopause.
- Avoid guessing whether or not this or that supplement works for your type.
- Choose the right herbs and forms of exercise.

YIN AND YANG THEORY

Before we jump into the discovery of your body type, let's take a deeper look at a few basic Sasang concepts. First of all, with 7.3 billion people on the Earth, you may be wondering why they fall into only four body types. To answer this, we first have to return to the basics of Asian philosophy, which holds that all things emerge from a central source, referred to as the Taiji, which then branches into yin and yang or two opposing energies, and then again into the so-called Four Manifestations, also known as the Four Symbols, which we will discuss shortly.

Even though yin and yang are often referred to as opposites, it is only when they are used in a specific context that we grasp their meaning. If we say the moon is yin, then we are only comparing it to things that are more yang, like the sun. If we say the sun is yang, we mean that it is relatively more yang than the moon. Actually, our sun may be more yin compared to the sun of a different galaxy! Dark describes a degree of darkness rather than the complete absence of light. When we say that something is moving slowly, we are comparing it to something in faster motion. Yet there are surely things that move more slowly! Hence yin and yang serve as symbolic images that help express the different degrees of relativity and how all things are intricately related rather than existing in isolation. Table 1.1 provides several natural phenomena that are represented by either yin or yang.

TABLE 1.1. YIN AND YANG NATURAL PHENOMENA

Yin	Yang
Moon	Sun
Dark	Light
Night	Day
Cold	Hot
Down	Up
Moist	Dry
Back	Front
Slow	Fast
Feminine	Masculine