

# The Application of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal in Chronic Respiratory Diseases

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**Abstract:** Chronic respiratory diseases (CRDs), such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, bronchial asthma, and chronic bronchitis, are characterized by high incidence, recurrent episodes, and prolonged courses, seriously endangering human health. Western medicine mainly focuses on symptom control and inflammation relief, but it is difficult to solve the root cause of recurrent attacks. The Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal, a classic therapeutic approach in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), is based on the Lung-Spleen Correlation Theory. It takes “tonifying the spleen and benefiting qi” as the core, regulates the functional balance of the lung and spleen, and achieves the purpose of treating chronic respiratory diseases. The research aims to provide theoretical reference and clinical guidance for the TCM treatment of chronic respiratory diseases and promote the inheritance and innovation of TCM characteristic therapies.

**Keywords:** Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal; Chronic respiratory diseases; Traditional Chinese medicine treatment; Spleen and stomach regulation; Lung-Spleen Correlation Theory

## 1. Theoretical Basis of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal

The Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal is an important therapeutic method in TCM, derived from the Five Elements Theory and the visceral manifestation theory. Its formation and development are closely linked to the understanding of the physiological and pathological relationships between the lung and spleen in TCM, laying a solid theoretical foundation for its application in chronic respiratory diseases.

The core connotation of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal is to treat lung diseases by regulating the spleen. It adheres to the principle of “treating the root cause” in TCM, aiming to restore the normal function of the lung by tonifying the spleen and benefiting qi, and fundamentally solve the pathological basis of chronic respiratory diseases.

Its therapeutic principle is “tonifying the spleen to nourish the lung.” For chronic respiratory diseases caused by lung-spleen qi deficiency, it does not directly tonify the lung alone, but focuses on tonifying the spleen. By strengthening the spleen’s transportation and transformation function, it increases the production of qi and blood, so that the lung can obtain sufficient nourishment, and then achieves the effect of tonifying the lung and consolidating the exterior<sup>[1]</sup>.

Its therapeutic characteristic is “holistic regulation.” It does not isolate the lung as a single organ but considers the human body as an organic whole, regulating the functional balance of the lung and spleen, and improving the body’s overall qi and blood status, thereby enhancing the body’s resistance to pathogens and reducing the recurrence of chronic respiratory diseases.

## 2. Application Mechanism of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal in Chronic Respiratory Diseases

The therapeutic effect of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal on chronic respiratory diseases is achieved through multiple pathways such as regulating visceral function, improving pathological products, and enhancing immune function. Its mechanism is consistent with the holistic concept and syndrome differentiation and treatment of TCM, and also has a certain correspondence with modern medical research.

### 2.1 Regulating Visceral Function and Restoring Lung-Spleen Coordination

Chronic respiratory diseases are often accompanied by long-term lung-spleen qi deficiency, and the coordination function between the lung and spleen is impaired. The Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal targets this key link and exerts a regulatory effect. By tonifying the spleen and benefiting qi, it enhances the spleen’s transportation and transformation function, increases the production of qi and blood, and provides sufficient nutritional support for the lung. This can improve the symptoms of lung qi deficiency such as shortness of breath, fatigue, and weak cough, and restore the lung’s functions of governing qi, regulating respiration, and defending the exterior. At the same time, the method can also regulate the mutual promotion relationship between the lung and spleen, making the spleen’s transportation and transformation and the lung’s qi transformation form a positive cycle. This not only improves the local function of the lung but also enhances the body’s overall visceral coordination, laying a foundation for the recovery of chronic diseases<sup>[2]</sup>.

## 2.2 Improving Pathological Products and Alleviating Disease Progression

Phlegm and dampness are important pathological products and pathogenic factors in chronic respiratory diseases. The generation of phlegm is closely related to spleen deficiency. The Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal strengthens the spleen's function of transporting water and dampness by tonifying spleen qi, fundamentally reducing the source of phlegm production. For the accumulated phlegm in the lung, it can promote the lung's function of dispersing and descending, help eliminate phlegm and relieve cough, and alleviate symptoms such as excessive phlegm, sticky phlegm, and chest tightness.

## 3. Clinical Application Paths of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal

### 3.1 Syndrome Differentiation and Medication Principles

The core of clinical application of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal is accurate syndrome differentiation. The common syndrome types of chronic respiratory diseases suitable for this method mainly include lung-spleen qi deficiency type, spleen deficiency with phlegm-damp type, and lung-spleen deficiency combined with blood stasis type.

For the lung-spleen qi deficiency type, the main symptoms are chronic cough, weak cough, shortness of breath after activity, fatigue, poor appetite, abdominal distension, loose stools, pale tongue with thin white coating, and weak pulse. The treatment focuses on tonifying spleen and lung qi, and the representative prescriptions include Buzhong Yiqi Decoction and Sijunzi Decoction. Codonopsis Radix, Astragali Radix et Rhizoma, Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma, and Glycyrrhizae Radix et Rhizoma are commonly used to tonify spleen qi, and Pseudostellariae Radix and Ophiopogonis Radix are added to nourish lung qi.

For the spleen deficiency with phlegm-damp type, the main symptoms are excessive phlegm (white, sticky), stuffy chest, shortness of breath, poor appetite, heavy body, fatigue, loose stools, pale tongue with white greasy coating, and slippery pulse. The treatment focuses on tonifying the spleen, resolving dampness, and eliminating phlegm, and the representative prescription is Shenling Baizhu Powder. On the basis of tonifying spleen qi with Codonopsis Radix and Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma, Poria Cocos, Alismatis Rhizoma, and Pinelliae Rhizoma Praeparatum are added to resolve dampness and eliminate phlegm<sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3.2 Combined Treatment Strategies

To improve the therapeutic effect, the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal is often combined with other TCM therapies or Western medicine treatments in clinical practice, forming a comprehensive treatment model. Combination with other TCM therapies: It can be combined with lung-dispersing and cough-relieving therapies for patients with obvious cough symptoms; combined with warming yang and transforming fluid therapies for patients with cold phlegm and fluid retention; and combined with non-drug therapies such as moxibustion (moxibustion at Zusanli, Zhongwan, Feishu and other acupoints) and acupoint massage to enhance the effect of tonifying the spleen and nourishing the lung. Combination with Western medicine treatment: For acute exacerbations of chronic respiratory diseases (such as acute infection), it can be combined with Western medicine such as antibiotics and bronchodilators to quickly control symptoms; for stable phase treatment, on the basis of Western medicine basic treatment (such as long-term oxygen therapy, inhaled glucocorticoids), the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal is used to regulate the body's constitution, reduce acute exacerbations, and improve quality of life.

## 4. Clinical Value and Practical Challenges

### 4.1 Clinical Value

First, it improves clinical symptoms and quality of life. The Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal can effectively alleviate core symptoms of chronic respiratory diseases such as cough, excessive phlegm, shortness of breath, and fatigue, improve patients' exercise tolerance and daily living ability, and reduce the impact of the disease on life.

Second, it reduces the recurrence rate. By regulating the lung-spleen function and enhancing immune function, it strengthens the body's resistance to pathogens, reduces the frequency of acute exacerbations of chronic respiratory diseases, and shortens the course of acute episodes.

Third, it reduces the side effects of Western medicine. Long-term use of Western medicine such as glucocorticoids and antibiotics may cause gastrointestinal discomfort, immune suppression and other side effects. The Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal can tonify the spleen and protect the stomach, regulate the body's balance, and alleviate the adverse reactions caused by Western medicine.

### 4.2 Practical Challenges

First, the standardization of syndrome differentiation is insufficient. The syndrome differentiation of TCM relies on the doctor's clinical experience, and there is a lack of unified and objective syndrome differentiation standards for the application of the Method of

Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal in chronic respiratory diseases, leading to differences in clinical application and affecting the stability of therapeutic effects.

Second, the modern research on the mechanism is not deep enough. Although the clinical effect of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal has been verified, the relevant modern research (such as pharmacology, molecular biology) is relatively scattered, and the specific molecular mechanism and target of its regulation of respiratory function and immune function are not yet clear, which restricts the academic recognition and international promotion of this method.

Third, the clinical promotion is limited. The application of this method requires physicians to have a solid foundation of TCM theory and rich clinical experience. However, there are differences in the level of TCM physicians in different regions, and the understanding and application of the Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal are inconsistent, making it difficult to popularize standardized treatment plans. In addition, some patients have insufficient understanding of TCM, which also affects the clinical promotion of this method.

## 5. Conclusion:

The Method of Tonifying Earth to Generate Metal, as a classic TCM therapy based on the Lung-Spleen Correlation Theory, has unique advantages in the treatment of chronic respiratory diseases. Its core lies in regulating the functional balance of the lung and spleen, fundamentally improving the body's qi and blood status, enhancing immune function, and achieving the effects of treating diseases and preventing recurrence. In clinical practice, through accurate syndrome differentiation and medication, combined with other therapies, it can effectively alleviate symptoms, reduce recurrence, and improve the quality of life of patients. However, it still faces challenges such as insufficient syndrome differentiation standardization, unclear modern mechanisms, and limited promotion.

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