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## THE KNOWLEDGE

**HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH THE CHINESE WAY**  
*Feeling sluggish in the morning and lethargic in the afternoon?  
Channel your inner qi, says the acupuncturist GERAD KITE*

**GET YOUR TIMING RIGHT** One of the foremost principles of Chinese medicine is the idea of propriety. Good health is maintained by doing the right things at the right time – working in sync with the laws of nature rather than against them. On a basic level, this is shown by the fact that we wake when the sun rises and sleep when it sets. A 24-hour day can be divided into 12 two-hour periods beginning at 3am, each with its own prescription of what you should and shouldn't do at that time

**THE EARLY BIRD** The Chinese clock is based on the idea that energy – qi – circulates throughout the body, and that certain organs contain more energy at particular times of the day. For example, between 5am and 7am energy moves from the lungs into the colon and activates peristalsis of the large intestine. This means we should be up by 7am to have a bowel movement to expel the waste of the previous day. This is also the best time of day for cardiovascular exercise

**BREAKFAST LIKE A KING** After the colon has been cleared, 7am to 9am is when the stomach receives the most energy. Make the most of this by having your largest meal of the day at breakfast, including protein and fats as well as carbohydrates

**SEIZE THE DAY** Rather than making you tired and sluggish, a good breakfast actually prepares you for the hours between 9am and 11am, when energy moves into the spleen. In the Chinese tradition this organ converts food into usable energy, meaning you are in your best mental state to perform challenging tasks and problem-solve at this time of day

**THINK IT THROUGH** From 11am to 1pm, energy moves into the heart. For the Chinese this organ acts like the emperor directing his subjects, just as the heart directs blood to every cell in the body. Take stock of the work you have done in the morning, and communicate your results. The next two hours are those of the small intestine, which separates the pure from the impure. Spend 1pm to 3pm sifting through the work of the morning and sorting good ideas from the bad

**WINDING DOWN** Having reached our peak around midday, the mid-afternoon slump so many people experience between 3pm and 5pm is caused by energy moving into the kidneys, responsible for building up our long-term energy reserves. Do any challenging problem-solving in the morning, and use this as a time for contemplative tasks instead

**SLEEP ON IT** Try to socialise early in the evening, ideally between 7pm and 9pm. From 9pm onwards we should be winding down, with the aim of being asleep by 11pm. The Chinese believe it is only during sleep that the mind fully processes the day's thoughts and feelings. Energy moves first into the gall bladder – responsible for decision making – and then into the liver, which detoxes on both a physical and mental level. Don't try to make decisions on the spot. Sleep on it, and the solution will have become clear by morning ●