



Figure 6.3.6

Over the long term, Heart blood deficiency may lead to heat from deficiency of the Heart. Because blood is part of yin, over time Heart blood deficiency can also affect Heart yin. Both processes can be seen when the tongue tip is red and the tongue body is pale (Heart blood deficiency with flaring heat from deficiency) or there is a pathological change in the shape of the tip (Fig. 6.3.6).

The symptoms of heat or fire from deficiency of the Heart—irritability, palpitations with anxiety, insomnia, restlessness, and a dry mouth and throat—are much more pronounced in Heart yin deficiency than in Heart blood deficiency. In the former case, the tongue body will be red with a strongly discolored red tip, or there may be, in addition to a peeled coating, a long vertical midline crack.

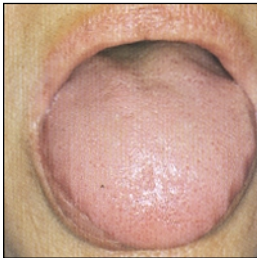


Figure 2.1.11

In this chapter we will discuss the tongue signs associated with the patterns mentioned above as well as those associated with constitutional weakness of the Heart. The latter condition may contribute to the formation of heat in the Heart or to Heart yin deficiency.

In the case of Heart yang deficiency, the tongue body will be pale, swollen, and wet. Besides fatigue and exhaustion, the patient will often experience severe shortness of breath upon exertion. If Kidney yang deficiency accompanies this condition, there will also be sensations of cold in the body (Fig. 2.1.11).

## Tongues Signs Associated with Constitutional Weakness of the Heart

6.1

### Long Tongues

6.1.1

A long, pale red or pale tongue that is big but within the normal range points to a strong constitution. As a rule, tongues tend to be narrow or thin. If the tongue is very pointed towards the tip and of a reddish color, it may indicate a constitutional weakness of the Heart. If the tongue body is reddish or red and shows reddish areas on the tongue body surface, it is an indication of the presence of internal heat. Heat in the body not only dries the body fluids, it also moves qi and blood vigorously. This movement of qi and blood causes the tongue to be extended so that it will protrude further from the mouth than normal. The opposite mechanism obtains for short and pale tongues. Cold slows down the flow of qi and blood and its contracting effect manifests in a short, often contracted, tongue body.

A long, reddish tongue often appears with a firm tongue body. Long-standing heat depletes fluids and yin, which in general causes hardness, firmness, and dryness of the tongue body. On the other hand, an accumulation of yin (dampness) is responsible for a swollen and soft tongue body.

The diagnosis of heat in the Heart is confirmed by the appearance of a long tongue with a very red tip or red points on the tip. It is not surprising, therefore, to find a long tongue, which is often seen as an indication of heat in the body, in conjunction with a reddish or red tongue body. The degree of narrowness of the tongue body reflects the extent of injury to the body fluids and yin. In general, a long, reddish, and especially firm tongue indicates a tendency to yin deficiency. Further, since yin deficiency often gives rise to heat from deficiency, which readily affects the Heart, a long tongue may specifically point to an imbalance in the fire phase.

**Tongue description**

Reddish, *very long*  
Slightly red edges  
Yellow, greasy coating in middle and posterior thirds

**Chinese diagnosis**

Constitutional heat in the Heart  
Heat in the Liver  
Retention of damp-heat in the middle and lower burners

**Symptoms**

Raised, bleeding skin lesions  
Strong itchiness  
Soft stools  
Inability to fall asleep

**Western diagnosis**

Lichen simplex (an eczematous dermatitis)

**Background to disease**

Caffeine abuse  
Frustration



**Figure 6.1.1.1**

Female  
22 years old

**Tongue description**

Pale red, long  
Drawn-in sides in the anterior third  
Slight reddening of the tip with curled-down tip

**Chinese diagnosis**

Constitutional heat in the Heart  
Onset of Heart yin deficiency  
Heart blood deficiency

**Symptoms**

Headaches  
Stomach pains with stress  
Inability to fall asleep  
Inner tension, inability to bear any emotional pressure  
Nervousness

**Western diagnosis**

Uterine fibroids

**Background to disease**

Repressed emotions



**Figure 6.1.1.2**

Female  
39 years old

**Tongue description**

Pale red  
 Long, pointed shape  
 Red tip  
 Vertical crack in the center

**Chinese diagnosis**

Normal  
 Constitutional weakness of the Heart  
 Heat in the Heart  
 Phlegm-fire in the Stomach

**Symptoms**

Acute stomach pains  
 Hypochondriac pain  
 Heartburn  
 Insomnia  
 Restlessness  
 Ravenous hunger

**Western diagnosis**

None

**Background to disease**

Irregular lifestyle  
 Caffeine and cannabis abuse

**Figure 6.1.1.3**

Female  
 34 years old

**Tongue description**

Slightly pale  
 Long  
 Vertical crack in the center with rootless coating

**Chinese diagnosis**

Slight Spleen qi deficiency (blood deficiency)  
 Constitutional weakness of the Heart  
 Stomach yin deficiency, onset of Kidney yin deficiency

**Symptoms**

Inability to relax  
 Inner tension  
 Headaches with tight neck muscles  
 Pain and weakness of the lumbar area  
 Occasional numbness and tingling of the right arm  
 Insomnia  
 Fatigue

**Western diagnosis**

Neck pain  
 Primary infertility

**Background to disease**

Overwork  
 Perfectionist attitude

**Figure 6.1.1.4**

Female  
 32 years old

See  
 CASE HISTORY  
 below



**Tongue description**

Reddish, long, narrow

Slightly yellow, thick, greasy coating

**Symptoms**

Stomach pain with stress  
Epigastric fullness  
Lack of appetite  
Depression  
Fatigue

**Western diagnosis**

Polyps in the stomach

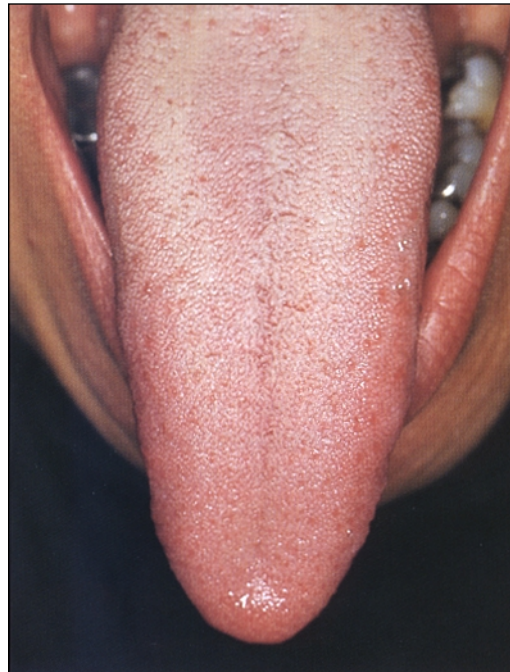
**Background to disease**

Overwork  
Emotional problems due to death of mother and divorce in the same year

**Chinese diagnosis**

Heat with injury to the fluids, constitutional heat in the Heart

Accumulation of damp-phlegm in the Stomach



**Figure 6.1.1.5**

Female  
42 years old

**Tongue description**

Red, very narrow, contracted

Long, firm tongue body

Slightly deviated

Red tip

Midline crack over the entire tongue body

Old, yellow coating

**Symptoms**

Atrophy and pain of facial muscles  
Complete loss of all body and head hair  
Facial eczema  
Exhaustion  
Insomnia  
Unwanted weight loss

**Western diagnosis**

Atypical, progressive collagen-vascular disease

**Background to disease**

Weak constitution  
Night work for many years  
Chronic lack of sleep  
Irregular eating habits  
Tea and coffee abuse  
Overwork  
Excessive use of willpower

**Chinese diagnosis**

Severe exhaustion of Kidney yin and essence

Lack of body fluids

Onset of internal wind

Heat in the Heart

Constitutional weakness of the Heart

Injury to body fluids due to heat from excess



**Figure 6.1.1.6**

Female  
38 years old



Figure 6.1.1.4

## Case History

Mrs. H is 32 years old and runs her own architectural business. She describes herself as a perfectionist. She is thus very critical of herself and the people around her, causing her to experience constant inner tension. At the same time, she is always worried about not being successful. She connects this fear to a feeling of tension around the neck and shoulders. She works more than 60 hours a week; the lack of spare time means she eats irregularly. She also drinks a lot of coffee and sleeps very little. The physical symptoms of which she complains are headaches and tension around the shoulders and neck. She is also extremely worried about her infertility. The tongue is noticeably long and shows a rootless coating. Her pulse is slightly rapid (*shuo*) and choppy (*se*).

**Analysis.** For constitutional reasons, her emotional reactions give rise to heat in the Heart, as manifested in the red points at the tip of the tongue and the slightly rapid pulse. Because the discoloration of the red points at the tip is not very severe, the heat in the Heart appears to be of recent origin, possibly related to starting her own business. However, the long tongue body reflects a constitutional tendency toward the development of heat in the Heart. Stress, a hectic lifestyle, and inner tension lead more readily to the formation of heat in those with this tendency than would be the case in individuals with other types of constitution.

The patient's irregular eating habits and excessive consumption of coffee has injured her postnatal qi, which in the long run will lead to malnourishment of Kidney yin and essence. The onset of this pathology is reflected in the rootless coating on the posterior third of the tongue, as well as the soreness in her lower back.

The vertical crack in the midline of the tongue indicates a slight deficiency of Stomach yin. Although the pale tongue and the choppy pulse denote blood deficiency, the pathology of the patient also points to the onset of Heart and Kidney yin deficiency. The sleeping problems, restlessness, and functional infertility point to blood as well yin deficiency. The occasional headaches and the tingling and numbness are related to Liver blood deficiency.

Treatment consisted of harmonizing the communication between the Heart and Kidney, and strengthening the blood and Kidney yin. Tai ji chuan, acupuncture, and herbs helped all the symptoms, including the infertility; two years later, she gave birth to a healthy baby.

**Discussion.** The long tongue reflects disharmony between fire (Heart) and water (Kidneys), which may in some cases be of constitutional origin. This disharmony may give rise to symptoms like restlessness and sleeping disorders that go hand in hand with deep-seated fears and long-lasting exhaustion.

### 6.1.2 Tongues with a Long, Vertical Crack in the Midline

A crack in the midline of the tongue is often seen as an indication of Stomach yin deficiency. The crack appears in the middle third of the tongue and is very often deep and wide. Constitutional weakness of the Heart can also present with a deep midline crack. This crack, however, is much longer than the former. It starts in the posterior third and runs to the tip or just short of the tip. If the tongue body color is pale red or normal, and if the crack is thin, there may be no pathology. The crack may simply indicate that there is possible constitutional weakness of the Heart. If, however, the tongue body is very red and the midline crack is very deep, Heart fire is probably present. If such is the case there will also be restlessness, irritability, palpitations, and mouth ulcers. If the crack is covered by a yellow, greasy coating, phlegm-fire is agitating the Heart. In this case the patient will exhibit restless agitation, a bad temper, and manic behavior. Finally, a red tongue body with a rootless or peeled coating in conjunction with a long, vertical midline crack indicates deficiency of Heart and Kidney yin.

A constitutional weakness of the Heart does not mean an organic weakness of the Heart. In those with this tongue type there is a tendency toward certain kinds of mental or emotional weakness: frequent attacks of melancholy and crying spells, emotional instability, fearfulness since childhood, depression. However, with an appropriate lifestyle, there may be no symptoms at all. Great care must be taken, therefore, when assessing the significance of this crack.

#### Tongue description

Reddish, slightly swollen

Long, vertical crack in the center with yellow, thin, greasy coating

Red tip

White, greasy coating

#### Symptoms

Panic attacks with fainting spells

Palpitations

Severe feelings of fear

Diarrhea with emotional pressure

#### Western diagnosis

None

#### Background to disease

Long unhappy marriage

Overwork

Excessive consumption of chocolate

#### Chinese diagnosis

Slight Spleen qi deficiency (accumulation of dampness)

Constitutional heat in the Heart with phlegm-fire in the Stomach

Heat in the Heart

Accumulation of dampness



**Figure 6.1.2.1**

Female

35 years old

See

CASE HISTORY  
below

**Tongue description**

Reddish, slightly swollen  
 Long, vertical crack in the center with slightly  
 yellow, thin, greasy coating

**Chinese diagnosis**

Spleen qi deficiency (accumulation of dampness)  
 Constitutional heat in the Heart with phlegm-  
 heat in the Stomach

**Symptoms**

Sudden vertigo  
 Trembling of the entire body  
 Numb areas in the extremities  
 Severe feelings of fear  
 Tendency to catch colds

**Western diagnosis**

Chronic fatigue syndrome

**Background to disease**

Physical and mental demands of competitive  
 sports

**Figure 6.1.2.2**

Female  
 35 years old

**Tongue description**

Pale red  
 Slightly red and curled-up edges  
 Long, vertical crack in the center  
 Indentation at the tip  
 Depression at the root of the tongue  
 Yellow, greasy coating along the midline crack

**Chinese diagnosis**

Normal  
 Liver qi constraint with heat in the Liver  
 Constitutional weakness of the Heart  
 Heart blood deficiency  
 Essence deficiency  
 Phlegm in the Stomach transforms into fire

**Symptoms**

Pain in the jaw  
 Loose teeth  
 Severe irritability  
 Exhaustion  
 Constipation  
 Thirst

**Western diagnosis**

Osteoporosis affecting the jaw

**Background to disease**

Anorexia nervosa as teenager  
 Mental and emotional pressures at work

**Figure 6.1.2.3**

Female  
 38 years old



**Tongue description**

Reddish  
 Red edges  
 Long, vertical crack in the center with a red tip  
 Yellow, thin, greasy coating

**Symptoms**

Inability to stay asleep  
 Hot feet at night  
 Occasional night sweats  
 Headaches  
 Tightness of the neck muscles  
 Blocked sinuses

**Western diagnosis**

Uterine fibroids  
 Allergic rhinitis

**Background to disease**

Long-standing emotional problems

**Chinese diagnosis**

Normal  
 Heat in the Liver  
 Heat in the Heart  
 Accumulation of damp-heat



**Figure 6.1.2.4**  
 Female  
 38 years old

**Tongue description**

Red, swollen tongue body  
  
 Long, deep vertical crack  
 Thin, white coating

**Symptoms**

Palpitations  
 Anxiety, restlessness  
 Insomnia, fatigue  
 Washes herself all day  
 Nausea and vomiting with agitation

**Western diagnosis**

Compulsive neurosis

**Background to disease**

Unwanted divorce  
 Loneliness

**Chinese diagnosis**

Kidney yin deficiency with heat in the Heart and  
 Stomach  
 Constitutional heat in the Heart  
 Normal



**Figure 6.1.2.5**  
 Female  
 40 years old



Fig. 6.1.2.1

## Case History

This 35-year-old private secretary complained about her unhappy marriage of 10 years. She did not know how to improve the relationship. During this period, her panic attacks occurred more frequently and became more intense. They always started with palpitations, a stifling sensation in the chest, and sudden diarrhea. She often called for an ambulance in these situations, thinking that she had suffered a heart attack. The patient occasionally fainted when the feeling of fear became too strong. She appeared nervous and hectic but at the same time gave an impression of vitality. There was a long, vertical crack on the midline of the tongue, and the coating was thin, yellow, and greasy. Her pulse was rapid (*shuo*) and slightly slippery (*hua*).

**Analysis.** The deep midline crack in this case, which extends to the tip of the tongue, is not just an indication of constitutional weakness of the Heart, but also suggests the presence of heat in the Heart. The red tip and midline crack are covered with a yellow, prickly coating. This is a sign of phlegm-heat in the Stomach. Phlegm-heat disturbs the chest, which the patient described as a stifling sensation. Because it is blocked by phlegm, the clear yang cannot rise, and thus causes fainting spells. There are two mechanisms at work here:

1. Panic attacks and spells of diarrhea dominate when heat in the Heart transforms into fire.
2. When phlegm-heat is the more prominent causative factor, it will agitate the Heart, manifesting in chest pains, palpitations, and fainting spells.

**Discussion.** A midline crack that extends to the tip of the tongue is an indication of constitutional weakness of the Heart with a tendency to develop heat in the Heart. People with this type of tongue tend to suffer from restlessness and/or frequently lead overactive lives. If this condition is aggravated by phlegm-heat, the individual will suffer from inappropriate emotional reactions, which in extreme cases can lead to mental illness.