

Solar Terms

Articles

Just like Sunrise and Sunset everyday, seasonal switches every year, the climate changes with the cosmic dynamics in the solar system. It doesn't matter if you are aware of it or not, the system is there in every minute, it affects our human health every moment. Most of the time, we don't understand why we catch certain sickness without any distinct reason, such as flu, lower back pain, even depression, left side of chest pain elbow pain, etc.. The truth is: there must be a reason. Besides the logical causes, injuries, there is an important clue for finding the causes and to prevent from occurring illness, 24 Solar Terms is one of the major approaches.

1. The Meaning of Solar Terms 节气 (JieQi)

Solar Terms 节气 (JieQi), is one part of the Chinese Calendar. There are 24 Solar Terms in one year, with 2 Solar Terms at each month. The first Solar Term in the month is named as 'Major Solar Term' 节气 (JieQi), while the second one is named as 'Minor Solar Term' 中气 (ZhongQi). Both are now collectively referred to as Solar Terms.

For example, in the first month of Chinese Calendar, there are 2 Solar Terms, the 'Start of Spring' 立春 (LiChun) and 'Rain Water' 雨水 (YuShui). 'Start of Spring' is the Major Solar Term, while 'Rain Water' is the Minor Solar Term.

2. The History of Solar Terms

Based on the period of revolution for the sun, moon and earth; humans (especially the Chinese) had established the year, the month, the day and a seasonal law (spring, summer, autumn, and winter) that complies with nature and the four seasons. Thus, it then later formed the calendar.

In the world, China is one of the earliest countries that invented the calendar. One of the traditional chinese calendar is the Chinese Agricultural Calendar 农历 (NongLi). It is also known as the Chinese Lunar Calendar 阴历 (YinLi).

For the Chinese Agricultural Calendar, it is an integrated lunisolar calendar or integrated lunar-solar calendar 阴阳历 (YinYang Li) that incorporates both elements of a lunar calendar with those of a solar calendar 阳历 (YangLi). This means that it embraces both the movement of the moon as well as that of the Sun. In Chinese Agricultural Calendar system, it takes into consideration the moon orbiting the earth

for one cycle, known as one 'synodic month'; and the characteristics of seasons changes represented by the 24 Solar Terms.

The Lunar Orbit

The 24 Solar terms are compartmentalized according to the position of the Sun in the ecliptic 黄道 HuangDao (i.e. the orbit of Earth around the Sun). Starting from the first point, 'vernal equinox' 春分 (ChunFen) (i.e. ecliptic longitude at 0°, the Sun irradiate vertically at the equator 赤道 ZhiDao), every movement of 15° is considered as one Solar Term. When orbits one cycle, returning back to 'vernal equinox' point, it is known as the 'Tropical Year' 回归年 (HuiGui Nian), with a total of 360°. Thus, it is divided into 24 Solar Terms within 360°, with 15° difference.

3. The Compartmentalization of 24 Solar Terms

There are 24 Solar Terms in one year, with 6 Solar Terms in one season. Each synodic month has 2 Solar Terms, i.e. the Major Solar Term, and the Minor Solar Term. The date of each individual Solar Term found on the solar calendar is relatively fixed. For the early part of the half year (January till June), the Major Solar Term falls on the 5th of each month, and the Minor Solar Term falls on the 21st of each month. As for later of the half year (July till December), the Major Solar Term falls on the 8th of each month, and the Minor Solar Term falls on the 23rd of each month. The difference between the date for Major Solar Term falling on early of the half year and on the later of the half year, is just 1~2 days.

The naming of each Solar Term is also very interesting. There are 4 seasons in a year. Thus, having the 4 different Solar Terms, showing the beginning of each season. They are the 'Four Starts' 四立 (ShiLi)- 'Start of Spring' 立春 (LiChun), 'Start of Summer' 立夏 (LiXia), 'Start of Autumn' 立秋 (LiQiu), and 'Start of Winter' 立冬 (LiDong).

There are 2 solstices for both the summer and winter, 'Summer Solstice' 夏至 (XiaZhi) and 'Winter Solstice' 冬至 (DongZhi). From astronomical view, solstice means the extremes of both summer and winter. On 'Summer Solstice', this day, there is direct solar radiation at the Tropic of Cancer 北回归线. It is the longest day of the year for the northern hemisphere. Although it's a day with longest day time, highest Sun elevation angle, it is still not the hottest day of the year. While on this day, 'Winter Solstice', the direct solar radiation at the Tropic of Capricorn 南回归线. It is a day with the shortest day of the year for the northern hemisphere, but it might not be the coldest day of the year.

The 'Vernal Equinox' 春分 (ChunFen) and 'Autumnal Equinox' 秋分 (QiuFen) are collectively known as 'Two Equinox' 二分, having the meaning of equal length of day and night. While other Solar Terms that show the changes in temperature are: 'Minor Heat' 小暑 (XiaoShu), 'Major Heat' 大暑 (DaShu), 'Limit of Heat' 处暑 (ChuShu), 'Minor Cold' 小寒 (XiaoHan), and 'Major Cold' 大寒 (DaHan) 5 Solar Terms. There are 7 Solar Terms that reflect the weather phenomena: 'Rain Water' 雨水 (YuShui), 'Grain Rain' 谷雨 (GuYu), 'White Dew' 白露 (BaiLu), 'Cold Dew' 寒露 (HanLu), 'Frost Descent' 霜降 (ShuangJiang), 'Minor Snow' 小雪 (XiaoXue), and 'Major Snow' 大雪 (DaXue). The 4 Solar Terms that reflect the phenological phenomena: 'Awakening of Insect' 惊蛰 (JingZhe), 'Clear and Bright' 清明 (QingMing), 'Grain Full' 小满 (XiaoMan), and 'Grain in Ear' 芒种 (MangZhong).

The sequence of 24 Solar Terms following the 4 seasons are: Start of Spring, Rain Water, Awakening of Insect, Vernal Equinox, Clear and Bright, Grain Rain; Starting of Summer, Grain Full, Grain in Ear, Summer Solstice, Minor Heat, Major Heat; Start of Autumn, Limit of Heat, White Dew, Autumnal Equinox, Cold Dew, Frost Descent; Start of Winter, Minor Snow, Major Snow, Winter Solstice, Minor Cold, and Major Cold. This is can be easily remembered with the help of a poem:

春雨驚春清穀天, chūn yǔ jīng chūn qīng gǔ tiān,
夏滿芒夏暑相連; xià mǎn máng xià shǔ xiāng lián,
秋處露秋寒霜降, qiū chù lù qiū hán shuāng jiàng,
冬雪雪冬小大寒. dōng xuě xuě dōng xiǎo dà hán.

4. The Effect of Solar Terms on Human Body

These Solar Terms are established from the orbits law of the Sun, the Earth, and the Moon. It is an important symbol of the seasonal changes. The special position of the Sun, the Earth, the Moon, and other celestial bodies are always in an irregular, continuous changes. At the same time, this also causes the energy of the universe to change continuously. While this kind of change is very obvious volatile before and after of a solar term. According to the concept of Traditional Chinese Medicine – “The Unity of Human and Nature”, any changes of the “Nature ” will inevitably affect the human body. And, Solar Terms affected human body from two aspects.

1. The climate changes are relatively large during the period before and after a solar term.

Because of changes, a person with an old wound or suffering from chronic illness, his ability to adapt and his body resistibility become weak. This person always has a tendency to get sick or worsen of his illness. According to some medical statistics,

heart disease, stroke, asthma and other diseases happened at the time before and after a solar term, and during midnight. Humans get sick when his body's strain ability cannot afford the external climatic changes. This is as mentioned in The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon 《黄帝内经》 ⇨, "When pathogenic evils arise, the human's vital energy, Qi is weakened"

2. The universe's energy or cosmic energy changes are relatively large during the period before and after a solar term.

If at this time, we use some special methods to intervene, transforming the universe energy into our own use. It would have a multiplier role. Solar Terms Moxibustion is a great model that carries out the concept of successfully transforming the universe energy into own use, under the guidance of Traditional Chinese Medicine's theory. When treating a disease using Solar Terms Moxibustion, we can achieve the best result, at the same time increase our body's immunity and body's resisting power to diseases. Thus, when there are changes in the external environment, weather, climate and other factors, humans will not easily fall sick. This has tally with the statement in The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon 《黄帝内经》 ⇨, "Keeping the vital energy, Qi in body, exogenous pathogens can't invade our body".

5. The Effect of Solar Terms

Solar Terms is based on the orbit of the Earth around the Sun, axial tilt, the inclination of the Sun's trajectory, and the distance perihelion (in January) and aphelion (in July), which generate energy influence to the Earth, thus it affects our health. We may not be aware of the effect, but it happens. In December and January, the Earth energy vortex reaches its "valley"; in June and July, the Earth vortex reaches its "peak". This causes corresponding health consequences. Typically, in winter, there are more diseases which are related with kidneys, urinary disorders, lower back soreness or pain and a lot more; in summer, there are more sickness which are related with the heart, such as chest pain, skin disorders, etc. It is very beneficial to understand the energy shift during a year in based on Solar Terms. Prevention, treatment for health issues are established scientifically. Moxibustion is one of the most traditional and effective models of energy boosting.

6. Moxibustion, Solar Terms Moxibustion

Moxibustion, simplified as "Moxa" (灸) , is a technique by burning Chinese mugwort on specific points, the energy is transmitted into the human body to heal various diseases or disorders. It has irreplaceable effects, this is contribute to the material: Chinese mugwort. Someone considers the effect is from the heat, then you can have any kind of heat, heating pad, shower, sona, even infrared heating lamp, etc, they can't achieve the same effect with Moxa. Why? Because the herb mugwort has its special nature:

1. Its energy goes along meridians, it is not a simple straight line;
2. Its heat can penetrate human body and drive away coldness;
3. Its energy can unblock the energy (qi) circulation, get rid of qi or blood stagnation;
4. Its energy can balance one's Yin and Yang, which means no matter one's problem is essentially excess or deficient, Moxa can work on both of them.

Moxa can help treat many chronic diseases, it also prevents us from getting diseases, strengthen our immunity. So for anyone, sick or healthy, you can all take it. The only issue is the smoke. Many people are trying to take the smoke away, they use charcoal, you can get the heat, but you lose the major effect. But many people love the smell.

There are a few different ways of moxibustion, such as moxibustion with moxa cone, moxibustion with moxa stick moxibustion with warming needle moxibustion with medicines or herbs, solar term moxibustion and others. When different ways of moxibustion are applied based on different condition of sickness, it usually gets miraculous effects.

Children may be scared of needles, but they won't be scared of moxa. For chronic diseases such as asthma, food allergies, allergies, indigestion, low immunity etc. Through moxa, the sickness vanishes naturally.

7. The Role of Solar Terms Moxibustion

Solar Terms Moxibustion is a special moxibustion method. By utilizing the specific Solar Term, to have moxibustion on different acupoints according to different body conditions, under the guidance of Traditional Chinese Medicine's theory, we can achieve much better effect.

Solar Terms Moxibustion utilizes the heat stimulation from the burning Moxa, and the Moxa herb itself to warm the channels and meridians. This is to strengthen the stimulate the vital energy, Qi of the channels; regulating the body potential energy; transforming the universe energy for body own use; establishing a relation between the human's balance system and the natural's system. All these lead to curing of diseases and improves the body's resistance to disease and adaptability.

8. The Clinical Usage of Solar Terms Moxibustion—Summer Moxa

According to the Solar Terms, in summer the universal energy reaches its peak, to apply moxa at this season, pacifically, the best days are just 2-3 weeks, before and after June 21. In Chinese tradition, they follow the discipline: treating the winter sickness in summer, and treat the summer sickness in winter. This is to utilize the

“valley” and “peak” energy periods, also the sickness is the weakest in the opposite seasons. To treat them in the “low season, it is much more effective than other seasons. IN summer, moxa can best treat or prevent the following diseases:

1. Internal Disorders: treat and prevent stroke, high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, asthma, stomach pain, bloating, diarrhea, hiccups; diabetes, obesity, high cholesterol, hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, impotence, chronic nephritis, enuresis, UTI, chronic lower back pain (lumbago, vertebro protrusion, etc.).
2. External Disorders: Cervical spondylosis, acute and chronic lumbar sprain, all kinds of arthritis, urticaria.
3. Gynecologic Conditions: dysmenorrhea, uterine fibroids, ovarian cysts, infertility, menometrorrhagia, etc.
4. Pediatric diseases: anorexia, enuresis, food allergies, low immunity, etc.
5. ENT diseases: Allergic rhinitis (allergic rhinitis), sinus.

(<https://cusv.us/solar-terms/>)

1. **The Beginning of Spring:** This is the beginning of the lunar year – the Spring Festival. In ancient times, people sacrificed to the god of spring on this day to pray for a good harvest and fortune in the upcoming year.
2. **The Rains:** After the Beginning of Spring, the southeast wind begins to blow, and rain begins to increase. Chinese people tend to graft trees on this day as the rain is good for trees.
3. **The Waking of Insects:** This is the time when the temperatures rise. Only after this day, farmers would start to sow wheat and people would take smoking wormwood grass around the four corners of their home to drive away snakes, insects, mosquitoes, rats and musty smells.
4. **The Spring Equinox:** By this day, Spring is half over and wheat is growing more quickly. Farmers strengthen the management of the wheat field and apply fertilizer.
5. **Pure Brightness:** Everything is cleaned and becomes bright on this day, and people go on spring outings and sweep tombs and offer sacrifices to remember their ancestors.
6. **Grain Rain:** This is the last solar term of spring. Due to the volume of rain, it is a good time for planting. People plant sorghum, melons and beans around Grain Rain time.
7. **The Beginning of Summer:** It is the turning point between spring and summer, and the plants sown in Spring have grown upright.
8. **Grain Full:** This means that the seeds of summer crops start to be full but not yet mature.
9. **Grain in Ear:** The summer crops like wheat are ready to harvest, summer sowing autumn crops like rice are supposed to be sown. Thus it is the busiest time of the year.
10. **The Summer Solstice:** It is the longest day of the year in all parts of the northern hemisphere. On this day northerners would eat noodles and many southerners would worship their ancestors.
11. **Slight Heat:** Slight heat means it starts to get hot, but the hottest days have not yet arrived. All the crops have entered the stage of vigorous growth and farmers need to strengthen the field management.
12. **Great Heat:** In most areas of China, it is the hottest time of the year, and crops grow at the fastest rate. On this day, people drink special tea, put ginger in the sun to dry, burn a kind of fragrant plant, and drink mutton soup to banish excessive heat.
13. **The Beginning of Autumn:** It is the first solar term of autumn, and although it literally means the beginning of autumn, the “Autumn Tiger (after heat)” effect still occurs. This is the time of the ripening of the autumn harvesting crops.
14. **The Limit of Heat:** It is the solar term that represents the transition of temperature from hot to cool.
15. **White Dew:** As the weather gradually turns cool, dew will appear in the early morning on the ground and leaves. By this day, people would feel the obvious fall of temperature and thus know to protect the crops from freeze injury.
16. **The Autumnal Equinox:** Like the Spring Equinox, day and night are equally long on this day, and it is the time for farmers to sow winter wheat and winter rice.
17. **Cold Dew:** Dew on the ground is colder than that of the White Dew, and is likely to become frozen dew, so it is called cold dew. This is the transition of the climate from cool to cold.
18. **Frost’s Descent:** “Frost’s Descent” means that the weather is getting colder and frost is beginning to fall. The earlier the first frost comes, the greater the damage it does to crops. People should pay attention to their health.
19. **The Beginning of Winter:** All the autumn crops should be dried and stored in the storehouse, and the animals have gone into hibernation. Farmers should hurry up to sow winter wheat. Forest fire prevention work should also be put on the agenda.
20. **Slight Snow:** The temperature drops, gradually falling below 0°C, but the earth has not yet reached very cold temperatures. Although it begins to snow, the snow is not big. Therefore this time is called Slight Snow.

21. **Great Snow:** The weather gets colder and it is more likely for snow to fall. According to an old saying “A timely heavy snow promises a good harvest”, so if it snows heavily at the time of Great Snow, farmers would have a good harvest later.
22. **The Winter Solstice:** The ancients believed that from the Winter solstice, the Yang energy of heaven and earth began to grow stronger and stronger, representing the beginning of the next cycle. Therefore, people worship gods and ancestors on this day. The northerners would usually eat savoury dumplings while the southerners would normally eat sweet dumplings.
23. **Slight Cold**
24. **Great Cold:** Slight cold and Great cold are supposed to be the coldest times of the year. Although it is the slack season for farming, people are quite busy preparing for the Spring Festival during these two solar terms.

(<https://www.confuciusinstitute.ac.uk/the-24-solar-terms-mystery-revealed/>)