

In my [APRIL 26 Newsletter](#), I explained what causes aging...at least those forces over which we have some control. I wrote that when you are born, you have reserves of energy that will keep you alive for days even without water or food. Your so-called “inner candle” can burn slowly or quickly depending on your lifestyle. In this blog, I want to explain further. It gets a bit philosophical, so bear with me.

Qi (pronounced “chee”) is the universal life force, the bioelectromagnetic field emitted by any living form. Scientists agree that this field is a fundamental byproduct of life's electrochemical processes, ranging from single-celled organisms to complex animals. Qi is a common term used in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Though Qi is a general term for “energy,” when referred to in the three Dan Tien, it takes three different forms:

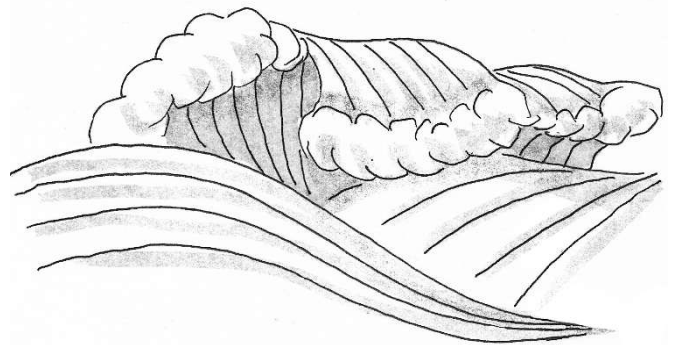
- In the lower Dan Tien (lower abdomen) it is **Jing**
- In the middle Dan Tien (chest) it is **Qi**
- In the upper Dan Tien (head) it is **Shen**

Jing is Qi in a denser, more material form, and is considered a strong form of energy associated with reproduction and capable of manifesting externally as sperm and sexual fluids. Other related names include “kidney essence,” “Yuan Qi,” and “primary Qi.”

Qi in the middle Dan Tien does not manifest in any external, material form but circulates through the body like an electric current.

Shen, like Qi, cannot be perceived externally, but is experienced subjectively as mental clarity and alertness. Some call it “spirit” or “consciousness.”

These three forms of energy are capable of being transformed into one another: Jing becomes Qi, and Qi becomes Shen. To understand this, the Chinese use the metaphor of water. Jing is the process of all rivers flowing to the ocean. When the sun shines on the ocean, the water evaporates. This process is a metaphor for Qi. When the clouds collect and rain falls, this process is Shen.



The Chinese comprehend things in movement, because movement is life. Stagnation is death. In the west, we are more material. When we say “wood” we refer to a thing, a piece of a tree. When the Chinese say wood, they refer to upward and outward growth, something green, alive, changing. So, too, Jing, Qi, and Shen are not things, but processes occurring in the head, the chest, and the lower abdomen.

The amount of Jing collected determines our longevity. It is used up by life activities, shock or stress, illness, sex, having babies, etc. There are two kinds of Jing essence, often referred to as pre-natal and post-natal Jing. Pre-natal Jing originates from our parents’ sperm and egg, and is half the determining factor for our energy. If our parents were old and sick, if the genes we inherited are weak, this partially determines our life-force. Post-natal Jing is the second determining factor for our health, and it comes from Gu Qi (energy from the food we eat) and Da Qi (energy resulting from the air we breathe). For example, you can inherit weak genes from your parents, but if you eat well and breathe clean air while living a relaxed lifestyle, you can often avoid health problems. Conversely, if you have strong genetics, but eat junk-food, smoke, and have a stressful job or bad relationship, you can suffer from ill health. Health and longevity are determined by both pre-natal and post-natal Jing essence.

Earlier I mentioned how Jing becomes Qi and Qi becomes Shen, much like the rain cycle. The ocean evaporates (Jing is used), the water is lifted (converted into energy or Qi), and forms clouds (Shen). When the rain falls, then it is Shen nurturing Jing. The water returns to the ocean. This is what Qigong does. While our everyday activities require Jing to be converted into Qi for energy and Shen for mental activity, draining our reserves, we can reverse this process. By turning our thoughts—our Shen—towards our breathing and connecting our mind with our body, we can nurture our Jing essence, thereby strengthening our health and longevity. Watch my free video [Medical Qigong](#).



My Medical Qigong class in the fall of 2024, Semione, Switzerland.