

Pulse Diagnosis

Please Note: THE SECOND SLIDE (of the AHG webinar) DESCRIBING THE LONG PULSE MISTAKENLY WAS DESCRIBING THE THIN PULSE. THE LONG PULSE IS AN INDICATION OF POSSIBLE LIVER YANG RISING HYPERTENSION. <http://www.planetherbs.com/>

Taken on the radial artery of both hand wrists.

Three positions with two depths on each represent the 12 internal TCM organ functions.

Begin by evaluating the overall quality of the pulse in all positions but especially where it is most easily perceived which is in the middle guan position just over the styloid bone.

Four basic pulses:

1. Floating, 2. Deep, 3. Slow, 4. Rapid

Four basic categories of disease:

1. Cold, 2. Heat, 3. Excess, 4. Deficiency
- Possibly beyond this Stagnation or congestion.

Floating and or deep is relatively easy to determine. Floating is felt more on the surface as opposed to deep where one has to palpate deeper on the vein.

Slow and rapid is the easiest to determine. Count the number of beats within 15 seconds and multiply by four. If more than 80 it is rapid or racing. If it is less than 60 it is slow.

Ask oneself the following:

1. Is the pulse fast or slow?
2. Is it floating or deep?"
3. Does it have force or not?
4. Is it long or short?

Fast or slow is simply counting the beats. Floating or deep, force or no force is its response to pressure. Long or short is whether it can be felt all the way to the proximal 3rd or "chi" position.

Learn the quality of the pulses before learning the meaning. This is because pulses can have more than one quality. Later other signs and symptoms can help to determine or refine one's understand of a particular pulse quality.

Further subdivide the qualities in terms of the following chart:

Floating	Deep	Slow	Rapid
Floating	Deep	Slow	Rapid
Hollow or leek stalk	Hidden	Bound (knotted) (irregularly irregular)	Skipping
Drumskin	Confined	Regularly intermittent	Racing
Soft or soggy	Weak	Choppy	Stirring
Vacuuous			
Surging			
Scattered			

Distinguish between the pairs of opposites:

Floating – deep

Fast- slow

Slippery – choppy

Long – short

Excess (strong) – deficient (weak)

The Forceful pulses are: excess, wiry, tight, stirring, slippery, confined, long and large.

The forceless pulses are minute or thready, weak, vacuuous, hollow, scattered, soggy and regularly irregular.

In addition the pulses can be either slight or more of each quality.

Ideally the pulse is taken early in the morning, just before sunrise when yin and yang cosmically is more in balance. The pulse is influenced by activities, food, emotional upset, etc. So briefly ask about recent activities.

The palm of the hand should be held on a level just below the wrist with the hand slightly face up.

Be sure the breath is normal. In antiquity the standard for measuring beats was based on the respiration of the practitioner. So the practitioner's breath should be relaxed and unconstrained. Normal pattern was four impulses per one normal inhale and exhalation of the practitioner. 5 or more mean't more rapid and 3 or less was slow.

Position

Cun, Guan, Chi

Place the middle finger over the middle bar or guan position. The index finger over the distil cun position and the ring finger on the proximal chi position.

Palpate the pulses together in all three position, at different depths and in separate positions.

The amount of time should be about a minute. The pulse need only be taken to determine a particular nuance of a disease i.e. hot-cold, excess-deficient, internal-deficient, stagnant blood and qi, etc. For instance if a patient has a cold, flu, fever, sore throat, etc. the pulse need only be used to determine if it is hot or cold unless other signs cause one to consider other things are going on.

For a more constitutional evaluation one can take up to 15 minutes for a pulse evaluation.

The pulses are taken in a comfortable meditative position, sometimes with the patient's wrists positioned on a small cushion or pad.

There are 10 pattern discriminations with associated pulse images.

1. Eight principles
2. Five phase
3. Qi and blood
4. Fluids and humours
5. Viscera and bowels
6. Channel and network vessels
7. Diseases
8. Six stages
9. Four levels of heat

10. Triple burner

We will learn the Eight principles pattern discrimination as the first level of evaluating yin and yang nature of disease.

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Pulse</u>	<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Pulse</u>
Exterior	floating	Interior cold	Deep-slow
Interior	Deep	Internal heat	Deep, rapid
Cold	Slow	Internal deficiency	Weak
Hot	Rapid	Interior excess	Deep, excess
Deficiency	Vacuous, fine, soft, weak	Yin deficiency	Fine, rapid
Excess	Excess	Yang deficiency	Weak
External cold	Floating, tight	Qi deficiency	Fine, rapid, soft
External deficiency	Floating, relaxed	Blood deficiency	Fine (thready)
External heat	Floating, rapid	Yin collapse	Fine, rapid, soft
External excess	Floating, rapid	Yang collapse	Minute, weak

Qi and Blood pattern discrimination and the pulse:

<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Pulse</u>	<u>Pattern</u>	<u>Pulse</u>
Qi deficiency	Vacuous	Blood deficiency	Fine or thready
Qi collapse	Vacuous	Blood stasis	Fine, slow, choppy
Qi stagnation	Slippery, excess	Blood heat	Rapid
Qi counterflow	Wiry, slippery		

The 28 Pulses and their meaning

Rate

1. slow, 2. Rapid, 3. Moderate

Slow-indicates non-free flow of yang qi due to either vacuity or obstruction

1. Slow (Chi mai) – below 60 beats per minute
Meaning: Cold, Yin, internal. If it is also floating it is yang deficiency. If deep is lack of yang-fire

2. Relaxed, Moderate (Hun mai) – slightly slow, around 60 to 78 BPM beats per minute

Rapid- indicates yang qi moving rapidly

3. Rapid (Shuo mai) – above 82 beats per minute
Meaning: Yang pulse often suggests bowel heat (constipation). Floating and rapid without strength is yin deficiency. Deep and rapid with strength is internal excess heat,
4. Racing (Ji mai) – very rapid, above 120 beats per minute
Meaning: Excess yang, Heat and deficient yin

Moderate

5. Relaxed, Moderate (Huan mai) – slightly slow, around 60 to 78 BPM beats per minute
Meaning: Normal but it can also indicate some Spleen Dampness

Depth

1. Floating, 2. Deep 3. Hidden

Floating – indicates yang qi in the upper and outer parts of the body

6. Floating (Fu Mai) – felt on the surface, becomes weaker with increased pressure; rebounds to original strength when pressure is released.
Meaning: 1. External pathogen 2. Yin deficiency 3. Yang qi loses its root and floats upwards – each of these are determined by other corroborating symptoms

Deep – indicates yang qi in the lower and inner regions of the body

7. Deep (Chen Mai) – cannot be felt with light or moderate pressure, only with heavy pressure
Meaning: Yin pulse. Internal evil, also possible qi stagnation and deficiency.
8. Hidden (Fu mai) – very deep, very fine, very forceless
Meaning: Internal disease.

Length

1. Long Pulse, 2. Short pulse

9. Long (Chang mai) – Continuously palpable throughout all three positions
Meaning: Can represent qi counterflow, fire (inflammatory) excess but also a non-disease.
10. Short (Duan mai) – Cannot be felt in all three positions, felt only in middle or proximal position or it can feel shorter than normal in any position
Meaning: qi and deficiency patterns

Width

11. Thin or Thready (Xi mai) – feels like a fine thread
Meaning: All kinds of vacuity and insufficiency. Blood deficiency; Fine and rapid, yin vacuity with internal heat; Fine and slow, qi and yang deficiency

Rhythm

1. Skipping, 2. Knotted 3. Intermittent

12. Skipping (Cu mai)– rapid and irregularly irregular
Meaning: Fire and inflammation also possible qi stagnation.
13. Bound or Knotted (Jie mai) – slow and irregularly irregular
Meaning: accumulation, stagnation, stasis and obstruction.
14. Regularly intermittent (Dai mai) – slow and regularly intermittent (refer to MD or ER)

Arterial Wall Tension

1. Wiry or bowstring, 2. Tight, 3. Hollow or scallion stalk, 4. Drumskin, 5. Scattered
15. Bowstring (Xian mai) (Wiry pulse)– feels fine, like a taut guitar string
Meaning: Nervous tension, Liver wind and qi stagnation, also rheumatic and pain patterns.
16. Tight (Jin mai) – feels like a twisted rope and is larger than bowstring
Meaning: Cold
17. Hollow (Kou Mai) – floating, large, forceless, empty in the center
Meaning: Blood loss.
18. Drumskin (Ge Mai) – floating, large, hard, empty in the center
Meaning: External cold excess. In males it can be essence blood consumption. If females it can mean miscarriage.
19. Scattered (San Mai) – floating, large, forceless, no edges, empty in the center
Meaning: Kidney Qi debility and decay. Can be a sign of impending death.

Force

1. Replete or Excess, 2. Firm, 3. Vacuous, 4. Weak, 5. Soft or Soggy
20. Large (Shi mai)– feels wide, long, tight
Meaning: excess heat, fire, and inflammation
21. Firm (Lao mai) – Large, tight (more inhibited) excess or forceful, stronger than the hidden pulse.
Meaning: Excess accumulation patterns with stagnation.
22. Empty (Xu Mai) – floating, large, forceless
Meaning: Blood deficiency, heat stroke
23. Faint (Wei mai) – extremely fine and forceless, barely palpable
Collapse of Yang, great qi and blood debility. It can also represent and incurable disease.
24. Weak (Ruo Mai) – deep, fine, forceless
Meaning: Yang deficiency. Not always critical.
25. Soggy (Ru Mai) - floating, fine, forceless
Meaning: Yin deficiency. Kidney, essence and marrow deficiency.

Pulse Contour and Flow Wave

1. Slippery, 2. Choppy or Rough, 3. Flooding or Surging, 3. Stirred or Moving
26. Slippery (Hua mai) – horizontal gliding, smooth, and slippery to touch
Meaning: 1. Blood exuberance, heat (pregnancy) or 2. Phlegm and food stagnation.

27. Choppy (Se mai) – slow, fine, irregular rate and strength without actually skipping beats
 Meaning: blood deficiency, damaged essence, also possible qi stagnation or cold damp conditions.
28. Surging (Hong Mai) - floating, large, forceful
 Meaning: excess evil, fire hyperactive. If surging and forceless it is yin deficiency, Fire floating and water drying up.
29. Stirring (Dong mai) – rapid, slippery, forceful, either in the middle position only or possibly vibrating
 Meaning: Indicates pain and diseases caused by fright

The Six positions on each wrist

Right Hand

	Surface	Deep
Cun	Large intestine	Lung
Guan	Stomach	Spleen
Chi	Kidney yang or Triple warmer	Kidney Yang or Pericardium

Left Hand

	Surface	Deep
Cun	Small Intestine	Heart
Guan	Gall Bladder	Liver
Chi	Kidney yin or Bladder	Kidney yin or Kidneys

Current practice is to designate only kidney yin and kidney yang respectively at the left and right chi position of each hand respectively.

Quick Reference to the 28 Chinese Pulses

Floating – indicates yang qi in the upper and outer parts of the body

1. Floating – felt on the surface, becomes weaker with increased pressure; rebounds to original strength when pressure is released.
2. Vacuous – floating, large, forceless
3. Scallion-stalk – floating, large, forceless, empty in the center
4. Scattered – floating, large, forceless, no edges, empty in the center
5. Surging- floating, large, forceful
6. Drumskin – floating, large, hard, empty in the center
7. Soggy- floating, fine, forceless

Deep – indicates yang qi in the lower and inner regions of the body

1. Deep – cannot be felt with light or moderate pressure, only with heavy pressure
2. Weak – deep, fine, forceless
3. hidden – very deep, very fine, very forceless
4. Confined – very deep, bowstring, forceless

Slow-indicates non-free flow of yang qi due to either vacuity or obstruction

1. Slow – below 60 beats per minute
2. Relaxed – slightly slow, around 60 beats per minute
3. Bound – slow and irregularly intermittent
4. Regularly intermittent – slow and regularly intermittent (refer to MD or ER)
5. Choppy – slow, fine, irregular rate and strength without actually skipping beats

Rapid- indicates yang qi moving rapidly

1. Rapid – above 82 beats per minute
2. Racing – very rapid, above 120 beats per minute
3. Skipping – rapid and irregularly irregular
4. Stirring – rapid, slippery, forceful, either in the middle position only or possibly vibrating

Miscellaneous Pulses

1. Slippery – horizontal gliding, smooth, and slippery to touch
2. Bowstring – feels fine, like a taut guitar string
3. Tight – feels like a tight rope and is larger than bowstring
4. Fine (thready) – feels like a fine thread
5. Large – feels wide
6. Faint – extremely fine and forceless, barely palpable

7. Short – Cannot be felt in all three position, felt only in middle or proximal position or it can feel shorter than normal in any position
8. Long – Continuously palpable throughout all three positions

Source: *Secret of Chinese Pulse Diagnosis*, Bob Flaws,
Blue Poppy Press, 1-800-487-9296