

PULSES
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Aspect	Types	Mai	Pulse	Sensation	Indication	Explanation
Speed	Fast	Shu	Rapid Fast	More than 90 beats per minute or 5 beats/breath	Full Heat – fast with force Deficiency Heat – fast & thin	Heat accelerates movement
	Slow	Chi	Slow	< 60 beats per minute or 3 beats/breath	Cold	Cold impedes movement
		Huan	Moderate Relaxed	4 beats/breath. Has strong ST Qi. Normal in depth, speed, strength, and width. Can feel slightly slippery and slow (but not by the clock)	Healthy ST Qi Damp	If Damp, viscosity of fluids slows movement
Strength	Forceful	Shi	Excess/Full Replete	Feels forceful, hard, and long at all 3 depths	Excess	Qi and Blood saturate the vessels
	Forceless	Xu	Empty Vacuous	Superficial, wide, soft, & slow. Feels like you are pressing on a balloon filled with water.	Qi and Blood Deficiency	Lack of Qi and blood will fail to fill the vessel or move blood.
Length	Long	Chang	Long	Middle finger should align with styloid process of radius. When the proximal position extends well past the normal Chi position	Heat	Heat accelerates movement, and therefore also expands its normal boundaries
	Short	Duan	Short	Middle finger should align with styloid process of radius. When the Cun, Guan, & Chi position are crammed together	Qi Stag. – short w/ force Qi Deficiency – w/o force	Qi is either stuck & preventing blood from filling the vessel, or deficient & lacks the force to push blood through the vessel
Width	Wide	Da	Large/Big Wide	Wide. Broad in diameter.	Excess - EPF of Heat in the YangMing	Qi and Blood are strongest in the YangMing channels. With heat & excess they fill and widen the vessels.
	Thin	Xi	Thready Fine/Thin	Thinner than normal. Lacks force but still persists.	Blood Deficiency Qi Deficiency + Damp	Blood or Yin fluids can't fill the vessel to expand its width. Qi Def → lacks pressure to expand the vessel
		Wei	Faint Minute	Thinner than a thin (xi) pulse and soft. Barely perceptible. Can be felt and then is lost.	Deficiency Of Qi, Blood, Yin and Yang	Qi and Blood are too weak to fill up and drive the vessel
Depth	Superficial	Fu	Floating Superficial	Felt superficially (with light pressure.) Force decreases with added pressure, but not empty.	EPF – if floating w/ force Yin Def – floating w/o force	EPF - Defensive Wei Qi, which is yang in nature, pushes to the surface to attack when an invader is present Yin Def – Yang floats because Yin is cannot anchor it
		Hong	Flooding Overflowing Surging	Comes and goes like a wave – forceful in one position then receding in another. Superficial, wide, rapid	Heat injuring body Fluids	Heat is damaging the Yin. Yang fire floats upwards and Yin water dries internally.
		Ru	Soggy Soft	Superficial, thin and soft. When you push, it disappears. Soggy means it has no substance.	Chronic Qi Def → Damp	Softness and yielding can be SP Qi Deficiency leading to Damp. Floating also indicates possible Yin Def. Strong KD gives root to the pulse; if absent, the pulse can float
		Ge	Leather Drumskin	Superficial, wide & hard. Like a drum, tight on the surface, and empty underneath.	Severe Deficiency of Blood, Essence, or Yin	The pulse loses its suppleness because Blood and Yin have detached from the root.
		San	Scattered Dissipated	Superficial, wide, choppy, and forceless. Like scattered leaves it comes and goes. Progression of Kou Mai (scallion pulse)	Severe Qi Xu: Collapsing of Qi, Blood, KD or Yuan Qi. (Does not reflect Yin Def)	The pulse has no root or depth, meaning the KD Yang is not supporting. Internal organs are exhausted. Usually indicates a severe condition like imminent miscarriage.
	Deep (in order of depth)	Chen	Deep/Sinking Submerged	Felt deep on heavy pressure. Not as deep as a hidden pulse.	Interior Disharmony	Pathogens have invaded the deepest most interior parts and obstructing Qi and Blood.
		Fu	Hidden/Deep-Lying	Requires very heavy pressure under the sinews and muscles - Felt at the bone. Deeper than a deep (chen) pulse.	If forceful- IPF If forceless – Yang Def	In Excess conditions – Cold obstructing Qi from lifting In Deficiency conditions – Yang Xu too weak to push blood to the exterior
		Lao	Confined Firm Prison	Felt at the bone like a hidden (fu) pulse but can be considered firm, hard, and wiry.	Interior Cold or Blood Stasis	Felt at the deep level because Yang is deficient and failing to rise. Also, the firm or hardness can be due to cold contracting or stagnating the blood.
		Ruo	Weak Frail	Same depth as the Lao pulse but unlike it in that it is soft, weak, & thin at the deepest level.	Simultaneous Qi and Blood Deficiency	Blood is the mother of Qi, and Qi commands blood. When both are deficient, the pulse is deep, thin, and soft as blood cannot fill the vessel, and qi fails to rise.
	Both*	Kou	Hollow Scallion Stalk	Bob Flaws: "a pulse which is empty in the center, is extremely floating, disappears altogether on pressure, reappears again when pressure is released"	Blood Loss causing damage of the Yin	The outside structure of the vessels can be felt, but there is no blood surging through. The vessels becomes hollow as a result of hemorrhage.
Rhythm	Regular	Dai	Intermittent	Forceless and consistently Irregular or Regularly Intermittent – beats in a predictable pattern. Intervals can be quite long.	Yuan Qi Deficiency, Wind, Pain, Fright, Trauma	Advanced heart disease according to Western Medicine. Refer patient out.
	Irregular	Jie	Knotted Bound	Slow Irregular (less than 60 bpm). Stops at irregular intervals.	Cold EPF, Blood Stasis Excess Yin → Qi Stagnation	Yin and Yang are out of balance. Yin is in excess causing a slow pulse. Yang is deficient failing to regulate the HT
		Ji	Hurried Racing/Swift	Faster than a Rapid pulse (over 120 bpm or 7 beats/breath): feels agitated and urgent. Stops at irregular intervals	Simultaneous Excess Yang + Deficient Yin	Excess Yang in upper body causing a HT disharmony – palpitations, irregular rhythm, fast heart rate. High fever
		Cu	Hasty Abrupt Skipping	Rapid-irregular. Skipping beats	Stagnation of Blood, Phlegm, or Food. Excess of Yang + Def HT Qi	Yin and Yang are out of balance. Clinically severe - refer out for possible atrial fibrillation.
Shape	Rough	Se	Choppy Hesitant Rough	Choppy means it is rough & does not flow smoothly. Can be hesitant in that it seems to skip a beat. Also slow, thin, & feels sluggish	Qi or Blood Stagnation Blood Deficiency Phlegm or Food Stagnation	Blood disharmony – deficient or stagnated and failing to flow smoothly. Meridians are not being nourished appropriately.
	Wiry	Xuan	Wiry Taut/String Bowstring	Feels like a plucked guitar string – straight, flat, stiff, and inflexible without much pressure. Thinner and more firm than a Tight (Jin) pulse	LV Qi Stagnation Phlegm	This is a Wood pulse. When the LV does not course freely, it loses its flexibility in the sinews, vessels, and emotions. Phlegm can also stiffen the pulse.
	Slippery	Hua	Slippery Rolling	Forceful, but the beats have no edges or boundaries - "Like pearls rolling in a dish"	Damp. Phlegm. Food Stasis. Some Heat	Normal during pregnancy or menses. Dampness increases viscosity of blood so that it flows heavier
	Stirring	Dong	Stirring Moving Throbbing	Feels like a short pulse because it stirs and throbs in one position (likely in Guan/Middle). Combo of short, tight, slippery, and rapid.	Pain, Fright, Shock	Disruption of ascending and descending because Yin and Yang are out of balance.
	Tight	Jin	Tight Tense	Feels like a stretched out rope – forceful and tight. Can also feel like it is vibrating.	Cold or Pain	Vessels contract and squeeze tight due to Cold obstructing the Yang Qi