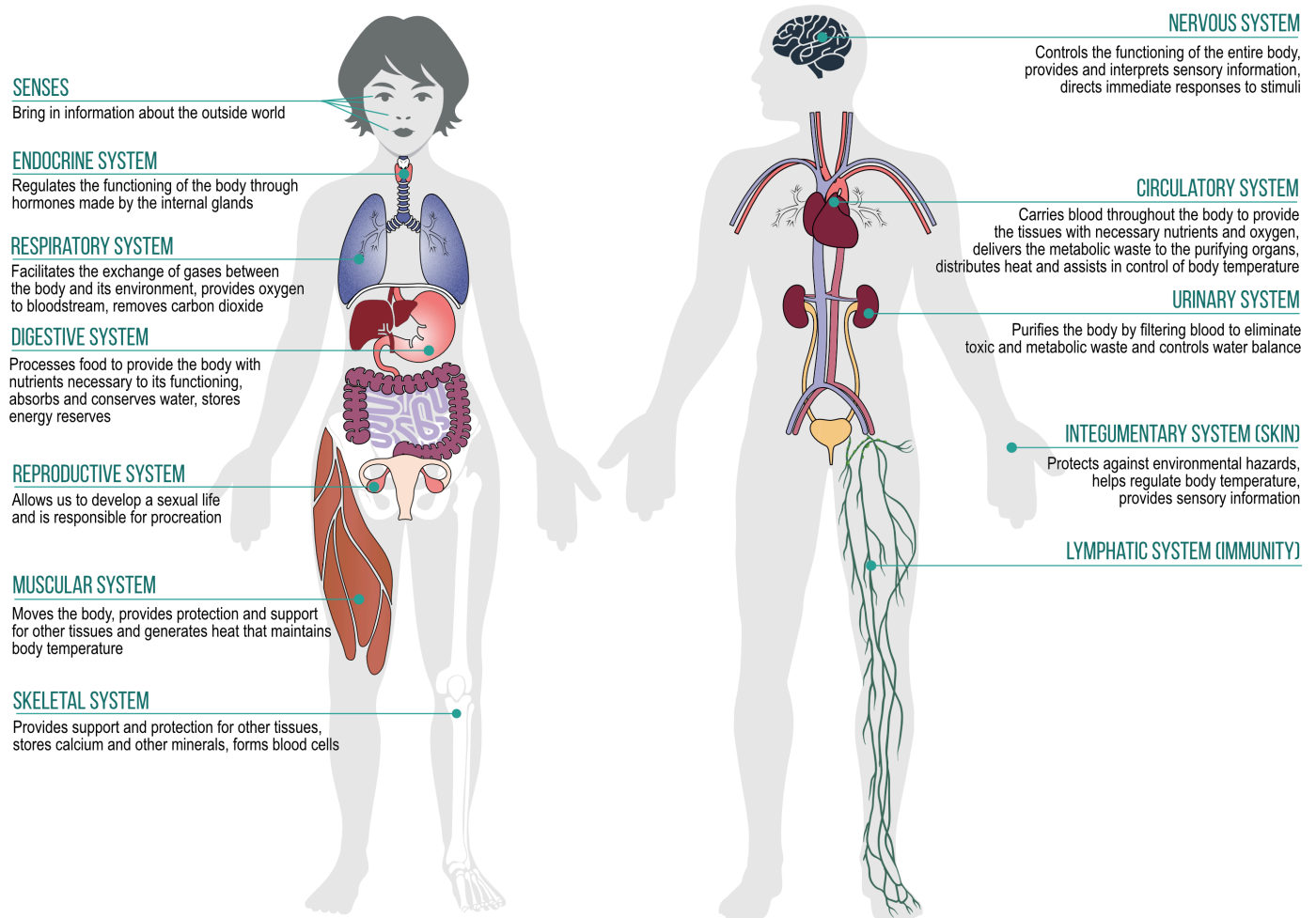


THE MAIN DIFFERENCE IN WESTERN AND EASTERN VIEWS OF PHYSIOLOGY

Both Western and Eastern way of thinking recognize that it is essential for the body to maintain the state of internal equilibrium. Human body constantly works on works maintaining the state of *homeostasis* on the levels of body temperature, nutrient concentration, oxygen/carbon dioxide levels, body fluid volume, waste product concentration and blood pressure. There is a constant push-and-pull going on between the opposing forces as the body adapts and readjusts itself to the changing internal and external environment.

The Western tradition divides the body into organ systems that have specific missions and perform coordinated activity. This is the **“zoom-in” approach**: to understand and explain something you first zoom in from the level of the entire organism to the organ system (circulatory, respiratory, digestive, and so on), then, if necessary, to the specific organ (heart, lungs, stomach, etc.)



The Western tradition also recognizes that although the body is made up of different systems, it functions as a unit. This means that several organ systems are involved in every aspect of the homeostatic balance and they need to be coordinated in their responses. However, when some part of your physiology begins to malfunction, you are usually referred to a specialist that has one dominant area of expertise. When somebody is zoomed in on a specific problem within a specific organ system, it can be rather hard to see a big picture of how it fits within the entire physiological state.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE IN WESTERN AND EASTERN VIEWS OF PHYSIOLOGY

The Eastern pattern of thought also recognizes that the state of internal physiological balance is essential and is dependent on the interplay of opposing forces. However, the yoga tradition takes the **“zoom-out” approach** and tries to see how a specific issue fits into a pattern of physiological imbalance throughout the entire system.

Instead of dividing the organs into systems based on their function, the yoga tradition instead focuses on the movement of nourishment throughout the system. It recognizes that for the body to be alive and healthy you need to take nourishment in (in the form of food, water or experiences), then you need to process it somehow, distribute and absorb the nutrients, eliminate waste, and as a result heal, grow and evolve. Multiple organ systems are involved in each aspect of this process. If something begins to malfunction, the first question you ask is not which organ system is affected (circulatory, digestive, immune, respiratory, etc.), but which direction of movement are you having trouble with (taking stuff in, processing it, distributing it, eliminating it or growing from it).

It is said that there are specific currents of energy that guide each one of those directional movements and there are specific strategies that you can employ to facilitate healing. This approach is called *The Panchavayu model* and it can be very effective in understanding and addressing physiological imbalances.

There are other yogic and Ayurvedic models that can be used to address physiological imbalances:

- Gunas (Sattva/Rajas/Tamas)
- Doshas (Vata/Pitta/Kapha)
- Vital essences (Prana/Tejas/Ojas)
- Chakras
- Warming/cooling model
- Excess/deficiency model (Brhmana/Langana)

The choice of an appropriate model will depend on the type of manifested imbalance. All of those models are non-invasive and substance-free; they take into account the whole body. They can be used in conjunction with traditional medical treatments and usually have no side effects. However, to employ those models effectively you would need to make a mental shift from thinking about “fixing a problem” to thinking about “restoring balance”.

