

Humors List

The theory of humors originates from ancient Greek philosophers (namely Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen) who wanted to explain how the body worked and what caused illnesses. They did this by examining the liquid and solid parts of the human body. Through this process, they began making connections between the mental and emotional aspects with the physical. The philosophers came up with the theory of four basic humors (black bile, phlegm, yellow bile, and blood), which became the basis of early modern medicine.

European physicians of the early modern age believed that when the four humors were out of balance, the body was susceptible to disease. The way to rebalance the body was through diet, exercise, herbal or mineral-based medicines, and “the management of the body's evacuations (e.g.: the blood, urine, feces, perspiration, etc.)” (Emotions and Diseases: The Balance of Passions). If a person was sick, a physician might prescribe the “opposite” medicine (hot medicine cures cold diseases, and cold cures hot), purge excess humors (like bleeding the person), or a combination of the two, plus making changes in the patient’s lifestyle.

The humors were used to explain the differences in age, gender, disposition, and emotions. (Emotions and Diseases: The Balance of Passions) Various factors attributed to an individual’s humors, such as seasons, times of day, where you lived (geography and climate), etc...

The theory of humors lasted until the Scientific Revolution, when new discoveries and scientific breakthroughs changed the views on how the human body functioned.

Temperament	Humor	Element	Season	Age	Quality	Organ	Planet	Functions	Characteristics
Melancholic	Black Bile	Earth	Winter	Old age	Cold, dry, sour, black	Spleen	Saturn	Nourish: bones, gristle, sinews	Sadness, contrariness, deliberation
Phlegmatic	Phlegm	Water	Autumn	Maturity	Cold, moist, tasteless, white	Brain	Moon	Nourish: the brain and kidneys	Calm, cool, unemotional
Choleric	Yellow Bile	Fire	Summer	Childhood	Hot, dry, bitter, yellow	Gall Bladder	Mars	Provoke expulsion of excrement	Rashness, anger, ill-tempered
Sanguine	Blood	Air	Spring	Adolescence	Hot, Moist, sweet, red	Heart	Jupiter	Nourish fleshy parts and warm the body	Cheerfulness simplicity, courageous, hopeful, amorous

Sources: The World of Shakespeare's Humors: Four Humors

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/shakespeare/fourhumors.html>

Emotions and Diseases: The Balance of Passions

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/emotions/balance.html>

Encyclopedia: Humors

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/humours.aspx>

Black Bile and other Humors

<http://elsinore.ucsc.edu/melancholy/MelBile.html>

Balancing your Humors: Does classical Greek medicine provide any insights today about mental health?

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/short-history-mental-health/201311/balancing-your-humors>