What’s it about? Even the healthiest bodies have crummy days. One day you feel great for hours; the next day, you’ve got a headache, stomachache or allergy attack that makes you want to crawl back in bed.

Why do we have these ups and downs? The Chinese say it’s because of something called Qi (say chee). Qi is a person’s total energy—a good, healthy feeling that flows like a stream around our arms, legs, head and middle. When Qi flows smoothly, we feel strong and good. When something blocks Qi, we feel tired, draggy, sick or in pain. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a gentle way to make sure Qi flows well to keep you feeling healthy.

How does it work? Picture a stream of water flowing from a garden hose. Now imagine stepping on that hose. What happens? The flow stops, the water backs up, the hose becomes stiff instead of flexible.

You can think about Qi the same way. Sometimes, something in your body blocks your energy flow, just like a stomp on a garden hose. When this happens, you may have a stomachache, nausea, breathing problems, pain or rashes—anything that makes your body feel worse instead of better.

To help you feel good again, you have to make your Qi strong—to take the kink out of the hose. Traditional Chinese Medicine gives you several ways to do just that.

This won’t hurt! One popular way is to help to correct Qi balance is with acupuncture. A therapist puts tiny, thin needles at the places in your body (called acu-points) where Qi is blocked, and where you may feel pain or sickness. But don’t worry! Acupuncture is nothing like getting a shot. Most kids barely feel anything because these needles are so thin and don’t go in very far. In fact, once you’re used to it, you’ll probably feel calm and relaxed.

Another way to make your Qi strong is acupressure. It’s a lot like acupuncture, but uses touch instead of needles. The therapist presses firmly but gently on your acu-points to help you with any nausea, breathing problems or other feelings that relate to your blocked energy. These same points can also be gently stimulated with electricity.

Traditional Chinese Medicine doesn’t stop there. You can also drink special herbal teas or eat certain foods (or stop eating certain foods!) in order to keep feeling good between sessions. Talk to your therapist about what feels right for you and if TCM could be helpful.