

The 8 Systems Mapping & Integration Model

Step-by-Step Clinical Assessment Tool

Dr. Darlene Easton, DACM, MACN, L.Ac, CNS · Easton Health LLC

Part 1 – Find the Therapeutics

Part 2 – Match the Therapeutics

How This Tool Works

The eight systems do not fail independently — they form an interdependent web. A problem in one system cascades into the next, and chronic strain across several at once produces the familiar clinical picture of fatigue, bloating, inflammation, aches pains, anxiety, and weight that won't shift. This tool helps

Two timing cues that localize the case:

- * **Digestive (System 1)** symptoms appear 30–60 min after eating;
- * **Microbiome (System 2)** bloating appears 1–3 hr after eating.

***The single best screening question:** “do symptoms reliably worsen with stress?”

A clear yes pushes the **Neural system (8)** toward primary.

you find the upstream driver so you treat the root, not the symptoms.

Part 1 walks you through five steps: score each system, total it, rank the systems, identify the primary driver using *cascade rules*, then build the sequence.

Part 2 gives the foundational therapeutics that match whichever systems scored highest.

Part 1 Step 1

Score each system: patient self-report + your observation

Have the patient rate each of the six prompts from 0 to 3. Then add your own objective findings (palpation, tongue, pulse, visible signs) as an observation score out of 6. The two combine into a system total out of 24.

Scoring scale (each prompt): 0 = never / not true · 1 = occasional or mild · 2 = frequent or moderate · 3 = persistent, strong, or highly relevant.

System total = patient symptom subtotal (/18) + practitioner observation (/6) = /24.

System 1 · Digestive Function & Assimilation

TCM: Spleen/Stomach — Transformation & Transport (Earth)

Patient self-score — rate each 0–3

Score

1. I feel heavy, bloated, excessively full, or uncomfortable after eating.

2. I regularly experience reflux, belching, nausea, or upper abdominal pressure.

3. I notice constipation, sluggish bowels, or a sense that food moves too slowly.

4. I have trouble tolerating fats, proteins, or larger meals.

5. My energy often drops after meals.

6. I suspect I am not digesting or absorbing food well.

Patient symptom subtotal

Practitioner observation — look for: Epigastric / CV12 tenderness or fullness; thick or greasy tongue coat, pale or teeth-marked body; weak/soft right-middle (guan) pulse; post-meal sleepiness; undigested food in stool.

Rate overall objective sign burden 0–6.

SYSTEM TOTAL (symptoms + observation)

24 /

System 2 · Microbiome Ecology

TCM: Large Intestine / Damp terrain (Metal–Earth)

Patient self-score — rate each 0–3	Score
1. I experience gas, fermentation, or abdominal distension frequently.	_____
2. My symptoms worsen with certain fibers, sugars, or fermentable carbs	_____
3. My bowel pattern is irregular or unpredictable.	_____
4. I deal with food sensitivities, cravings, or unusual stool odor.	_____
5. I experience brain fog, skin flares, or mood changes linked to digestion.	_____
6. I have a history of antibiotics, recurrent gut disruption, or suspected dysbiosis.	_____
Patient symptom subtotal	
Practitioner observation — look for: Lower-abdominal distension or tympany, gas on palpation, ileocecal tenderness; greasy or yellow tongue coat; slippery pulse. <i>Rate overall objective sign burden 0–6.</i>	
SYSTEM TOTAL (symptoms + observation)	<u> </u> / 24

System 3 · Gut Barrier Integrity & Mucosal Defense

TCM: Spleen Earth — holding & containing

Patient self-score — rate each 0–3	Score
1. I react strongly to foods that used to feel fine.	_____

2. I experience inflammatory symptoms that seem connected to eating.	_____
3. My digestion feels fragile or easily irritated.	_____
4. My skin, joints, or energy worsen when my gut symptoms flare.	_____
5. Stress, alcohol, or lack of sleep noticeably worsen my gut reactivity.	_____
6. I feel as though my system has become more sensitive over time.	_____
Patient symptom subtotal	
Practitioner observation — look for: Peri-umbilical tenderness; facial puffiness, dark under-eye circles, reactive/flushing skin; red tongue tip or peeled patches. <i>Rate overall objective sign burden 0–6.</i>	
SYSTEM TOTAL (symptoms + observation)	<u> </u> / 24

System 4 · Immune Regulation & GALT <i>TCM: Lung / Wei Qi — mucosal defense (Metal)</i>	
Patient self-score — rate each 0–3	Score
1. I catch infections easily or take a long time to recover.	_____
2. I deal with congestion, allergies, eczema, hives, or inflammatory flares.	_____
3. My body seems reactive to foods, environments, or stress.	_____
4. I experience chronic inflammatory symptoms such as pain, swelling, heat.	_____
5. Symptoms often flare after illness, travel, stress, or immune challenges.	_____
6. I feel my immune system is either overreactive or underperforming.	_____
Patient symptom subtotal	
Practitioner observation — look for: Eczema, hives, rashes; sinus or tender lymph signs; swollen tongue with red points; rapid or wiry pulse. <i>Rate overall objective sign burden 0–6.</i>	

SYSTEM TOTAL (symptoms + observation)

 /
24

System 5 · Mitochondrial Function & Cellular Energy

TCM: Kidney Jing / Yuan Qi (Water)

Patient self-score — rate each 0–3

Score

1. I feel fatigued even when I sleep a reasonable number of hours.

2. I tire easily with exercise, work, or stress.

3. I recover slowly after exertion, travel, or busy days.

4. My brain feels foggy or slow when my energy drops.

5. I sometimes feel “crashed” after doing too much.

6. I do not feel resilient or metabolically robust.

Patient symptom subtotal

Practitioner observation — look for: Pallor, low muscle tone, cold extremities, visibly slow recovery; pale or swollen tongue; deep, weak (chi/Kidney) pulse.

Rate overall objective sign burden 0–6.

SYSTEM TOTAL (symptoms + observation)

 /
24

System 6 · Metabolic Regulation & Insulin Sensitivity

TCM: Spleen–Kidney Yang / Ming Men (Earth–Water)

Patient self-score — rate each 0–3

Score

1. I crave sugar or starch, especially when stressed or tired.

2. I get sleepy, foggy, or irritable after carbohydrate-rich meals.

3. I gain weight easily around the abdomen or struggle to lose it.

4. I feel hungry again soon after meals or snack often to keep energy up.

5. I have energy swings, especially in the afternoon or evening.

6. My sleep, mood, or inflammation seem tied to how I eat.	_____
Patient symptom subtotal	
Practitioner observation — look for: Central adiposity (waist >35" F / >40" M), skin tags, acanthosis nigricans; swollen pale tongue with greasy coat; slippery pulse. <i>Rate overall objective sign burden 0–6.</i>	_____ / 6
SYSTEM TOTAL (symptoms + observation)	_____ / 24

System 7 · Liver Transformation & Clearance <i>TCM: Liver — smooth flow & transform (Wood)</i>	
Patient self-score — rate each 0–3	Score
1. Certain foods, alcohol, or medications trigger headaches, fatigue, or brain fog.	_____
2. I feel worse after richer, heavier, or higher-fat meals, even without overeating.	_____
3. I am quite sensitive to smells, chemicals, supplements, or medications	_____
4. My body does not handle or recover from what I take in as well as it used to.	_____
5. I have compounded symptoms — headaches, skin issues, fluid retention, sluggishness.	_____
6. My symptoms come and go with what I eat, drink, or am exposed to.	_____
Patient symptom subtotal	
Practitioner observation — look for: Right hypochondriac / GB-region tenderness, costal-margin tension; dusky/purplish tongue or red sides; wiry pulse; sclera or skin tint. <i>Rate overall objective sign burden 0–6.</i>	
SYSTEM TOTAL (symptoms + observation)	_____ / 24

System 8 · Neural Regulation & Gut-Brain Axis

TCM: Heart–Kidney axis / Shen-Zhi (Fire–Water)

Patient self-score — rate each 0–3	Score
1. I feel wired, tense, or on edge more often than calm and settled.	_____
2. Stress directly affects my digestion, appetite, or bowel habits.	_____
3. I have trouble shifting into rest, sleep, or recovery mode.	_____
4. I notice palpitations, shallow breathing, muscle tension, or internal bracing.	_____
5. My symptoms worsen when I am under emotional or cognitive strain.	_____
6. I do not feel my nervous system recovers well after stress.	_____
Patient symptom subtotal	
Practitioner observation — look for: Shallow chest breathing; diaphragm/rib, jaw, and shoulder tension; cold or clammy hands; wiry or tight pulse; trembling tongue; guarded abdomen. <i>Rate overall objective sign burden 0–6.</i>	
SYSTEM TOTAL (symptoms + observation)	<u> </u> / 24

Part 1 Step 2

Transfer the totals and rank the systems

Copy each system total into the table below, then rank them 1 (highest) to 8 (lowest). The ranking is the heart of the assessment — it turns a long symptom list into a clear order of priority.

System	Total / 24	Band (see Step 3)	Rank
1. Digestive Function	_____	_____	_____
2. Microbiome Ecology	_____	_____	_____
3. Gut Barrier Integrity	_____	_____	_____

4. Immune Regulation	_____	_____	_____
5. Mitochondrial Function	_____	_____	_____
6. Metabolic Regulation	_____	_____	_____
7. Liver Transformation	_____	_____	_____
8. Neural Regulation	_____	_____	_____

Part 1 Step 3

Interpret the scores and name the primary driver

Use the score band to gauge how active each system is, then use the prioritization rules to decide what to treat first.

Score bands (out of 24)

Total	Band	What it means
0–6	Low	Maintenance state — support and optimize.
7–12	Moderate	Contributing — monitor; treat after primary stabilizes.
13–18	High	Actively involved — a secondary driver or co-primary.
19–24	Very high	Likely the primary driver — treat first.

Prioritization rules

Score pattern	Clinical meaning	Priority action
Highest system score	Primary dysfunction driver	Treat FIRST
2nd highest score	Secondary contributor	Address after primary stabilizes
Multi high scores	System cascade	Start with digestive or metabolic system
Low across systems	Maintenance state	Support and optimize

Part 1 Step 4

override patterns : review these rules around clusters & overrides

Scores usually cluster. Recognizing these pattern tells you where to enter the web for the broadest benefit. Check these in order:

1. Neural override. If Neural (8) is high or co-primary with any gut/immune system, treat Neural FIRST. Sympathetic tone continuously reopens the barrier and shifts the microbiome, capping every other gain.

2. Structural flag. High Digestion (1) plus a history of C-section, abdominal surgery, endometriosis, or adhesions → refer for visceral / scar-tissue work FIRST; it is the mechanical upstream driver.

3. Gut cluster. High Digestion (1) + Microbiome (2) usually feed Barrier (3) and Immune (4). Enter upstream at digestion and microbiome; the downstream scores often fall on their own.

4. Metabolic cluster. High Metabolic (6) amplifies Mitochondria (5) and Liver/hormonal (7). Start with metabolic repair plus movement; energy and clearance follow.

5. Unclear / many high. When several systems tie, start with Digestion or Metabolic — the two changes that produce the broadest downstream benefit.

Part 1 Step 5

Build the sequence plan, then move to Part 2

Write the order you will treat in. Then pull the matching foundational protocols from Part 2 for each system, starting with the primary driver.

Order	System	Why it is here (driver / cascade / override)	Start date / review
1 — treat first	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
Support / monitor	_____	_____	_____

Re-score in 6–8 weeks. As the primary driver settles, secondary systems usually drop without being treated directly — confirming the upstream choice.

Quick Clinical Reference (for scoring & confirmation)

Use this while scoring to confirm which system a complaint belongs to and what to order next.

System 1 · Digestive Function & Assimilation

Common dysfunctions	Symptom signature (+ timing)	Top labs / tests	TCM correlate
Hypochlorhydria, low pancreatic enzymes, poor bile flow, sluggish motility/MMC, scar tissue.	Bloating 30–60 min after eating, belching, reflux, floating/undigested stool, fatigue after meals.	Fecal elastase, ferritin/B12, H. pylori, betaine HCl trial, SIBO breath test.	SP/ST Qi deficiency, food stagnation, Damp, LV overacting on SP.

System 2 · Microbiome Ecology

Common dysfunctions	Symptom signature (+ timing)	Top labs / tests	TCM correlate
Low diversity, SIBO/IMO, dysbiosis, post-antibiotic collapse, LPS overproduction.	Bloating 1–3 hr after meals, gas with fiber/sugar, brain fog after carbs, foul gas, cravings.	Comprehensive stool, SIBO breath test, calprotectin, organic acids.	Damp / Damp-Heat, turbidity, SP deficiency with Damp.

System 3 · Gut Barrier Integrity & Mucosal Defense

Common dysfunctions	Symptom signature (+ timing)	Top labs / tests	TCM correlate
Increased permeability, low mucus, low SIgA, NSAID injury, post-infectious disruption.	Expanding food reactions, post-meal joint pain/brain fog/skin, reactivity to stress/alcohol.	Stool SIgA (key marker), zonulin (cautiously), calprotectin, permeability ratio.	SP failing to contain, Damp with leakage, upright-Qi deficiency.

System 4 · Immune Regulation & GALT

Common dysfunctions	Symptom signature (+ timing)	Top labs / tests	TCM correlate
Loss of oral tolerance, chronic	Frequent infections, eczema/hives,	hs-CRP, ESR, CBC w/ diff,	Wei Qi deficiency,
LPS, mast-cell reactivity,	sensitivities, flares with stress, post-	SIgA, calprotectin,	Damp-Heat toxin,
post-viral dysregulation.	viral persistence.	histamine/tryptase if indicated.	latent pathogen, Shaoyang constraint.

System 5 · Mitochondrial Function & Cellular Energy

Common dysfunctions	Symptom signature (+ timing)	Top labs / tests	TCM correlate
Reduced oxidative	Fatigue despite sleep, exercise	Organic acids, ferritin/B12/	Qi/Kidney/Spleen
phosphorylation, cofactor	intolerance, slow recovery, brain fog,	folate/D/magnesium, free	deficiency, Shaoyin
insufficiency, inflammatory	post-exertional crash.	T3, fasting insulin/glucose.	depletion, Yang
inhibition, toxin strain.			deficiency.

System 6 · Metabolic Regulation & Insulin Sensitivity

Common dysfunctions	Symptom signature (+ timing)	Top labs / tests	TCM correlate
Hyperinsulinemia, insulin	Carb fatigue, central weight gain,	Fasting insulin (>10 IR),	Phlegm-Damp, SP
resistance, poor flexibility,	cravings, hunger soon after meals,	HOMA-IR (>2.5),	deficiency with
reactive hypoglycemia.	skin tags/acanthosis.	TG:HDL (>2.0), HbA1c, uric acid.	Damp, LV constraint, Stomach Heat.

System 7 · Liver Transformation & Clearance

Common dysfunctions	Symptom signature (+ timing)	Top labs / tests	TCM correlate
Phase I/II imbalance, sluggish	Food/alcohol headaches, chemical	ALT/AST/GGT, free T3/	LV Qi stagnation,

bile, impaired T4→T3,	sensitivity, nausea with fat, 1–3 AM	T4/reverse T3, estradiol/	Damp-Heat, Phlegm-
estrogen recirculation,	waking, cyclical PMS.	SHBG, glutathione.	Damp, Blood stasis,
NAFLD.			LV-SP disharmony.

System 8 · Neural Regulation & Gut-Brain Axis

Common dysfunctions	Symptom signature (+ timing)	Top labs / tests	TCM correlate
Sympathetic overdrive, low vagal tone, dysautonomia, visceral hypersensitivity, poor sleep.	GI worse with stress, anxiety, insomnia, palpitations, bracing, “wired but tired.”	Mainly clinical: HRV, salivary cortisol rhythm; exclude organic causes.	LV Qi stagnation, HT Shen disturbance, HT-KD disharmony, Shaoyang.

PART 2 - Treatment

Treat in the order you built in Step 5, beginning with the primary driver. Pull the block for each high-scoring system below. Apply selectively and in clinical context — these are foundational supports layered onto your acupuncture and herbs.

Order of priority within each system: food first, then lifestyle, then targeted supplements.

Sequencing reminders: Barrier = remove, repair, reassess. Liver = open elimination routes (bowel, bile, sweat) before driving Phase I. Neural regulation raises the ceiling on every other system’s healing.

System 1 · Digestive Function & Assimilation		
Dietary	Lifestyle	Supplements
• Protein-forward meals (20–30 g) • Warm, cooked foods preferred • Bitter foods (arugula, dandelion, radicchio) • Moderate meal size • Reduce fluids with meals • Mineral-rich salt for acid • Fermented foods if tolerated	• Eat slowly, chew thoroughly • Sit and relax before eating • No multitasking while eating • Consistent meal timing • Avoid late-night eating • Short walk after meals	• Digestive enzymes • Betaine HCl (if appropriate) • Bitters • Ginger, fennel, peppermint • Apple cider vinegar • Zinc • Iberogast / motility blends

System 2 · Microbiome Ecology

Dietary	Lifestyle	Supplements
• 25–35+ plant foods/week • Resistant starch (cooled rice/potato) • Fermented foods (kefir, sauerkraut) • Polyphenols (berries, olive oil, herbs) • Limit ultra-processed foods • Rotate food variety	• Avoid constant grazing • Support regular bowel habits • Daily movement • Time outdoors • Circadian alignment • Limit unnecessary antibiotics	• Strain-specific probiotics • <i>Saccharomyces boulardii</i> • Prebiotics (PHGG, inulin as tolerated) • Butyrate / postbiotics • Antimicrobials when indicated • Ginger / 5-HTP for motility

System 3 · Gut Barrier Integrity & Mucosal Defense		
Dietary	Lifestyle	Supplements
• Whole, low-irritant foods • Bone broth & collagen • Omega-3 foods (fish, flax) • Glutamine-rich foods • Reduce alcohol & NSAIDs • Remove triggers (gluten/dairy if needed) • Adequate fiber	• Prioritize sleep quality • Reduce chronic stress • Avoid overtraining • Consistent routines • Gentle exercise (walking, yoga) • Support regular bowels	• L-glutamine • Zinc carnosine • Collagen peptides • DGL, slippery elm, marshmallow • Aloe vera • Omega-3s • Immunoglobulins (colostrum)

System 4 · Immune Regulation & GALT		
Dietary	Lifestyle	Supplements
• Anti-inflammatory whole foods • High plant diversity • Mushrooms (shiitake, maitake) • Turmeric, ginger • Reduce sugar & processed foods • Adequate protein	• Sleep optimization • Stress-reduction practices • Moderate exercise • Sunlight exposure • Reduce chronic immune triggers	• Vitamin D • Zinc • Vitamin C • Quercetin • Astragalus • Medicinal mushrooms • Omega-3s

System 5 · Mitochondrial Function & Cellular Energy		
Dietary	Lifestyle	Supplements

• Nutrient-dense whole foods • Adequate protein • Healthy fats (olive oil, fish) • Colorful antioxidant vegetables • Iron-rich foods if deficient • B-vitamin-rich foods	• Resistance training • Regular movement / Zone 2 • Sunlight exposure • Cold/heat hormesis • Avoid overtraining • Prioritize recovery	• CoQ10 • Magnesium • B-complex • Carnitine • Alpha-lipoic acid • Creatine • NAD+ precursors
---	--	--

System 6 · Metabolic Regulation & Insulin Sensitivity		
Dietary	Lifestyle	Supplements
• Control carbohydrate quality • Increase fiber • Protein at each meal • Reduce refined sugars • Whole-food diet • Time-restricted eating (if appropriate)	• Walk after meals • Strength training • Consistent exercise • Sleep optimization • Stress management • Reduce sedentary time	• Berberine • Magnesium • Chromium • Alpha-lipoic acid • Inositol • Fiber supplements • Metabolic probiotics

System 7 · Liver Transformation & Clearance		
Dietary	Lifestyle	Supplements
• Cruciferous vegetables • Sulfur foods (garlic, onion, eggs) • Bitter greens • Fiber for elimination • Adequate hydration • Reduce alcohol & processed foods • Protein for detox pathways	• Avoid stacking stressors • Support daily bowel movements • Sauna / sweating • Moderate exercise • Consistent sleep • Reduce toxin exposure	• NAC • Milk thistle • Calcium-D-glucarate • Taurine • Glutathione • Dandelion root / bitters • B vitamins, magnesium

System 8 · Neural Regulation & Gut-Brain Axis		
Dietary	Lifestyle	Supplements
• Stable blood-sugar meals • Adequate protein & fats • Mineral-rich foods • Reduce caffeine & stimulants • Hydration	• Breathwork (slow exhale) • Meditation • Social connection • Play & relaxation • Vagal-tone exercises • Reduce chronic stress	• Magnesium • B vitamins • Omega-3s • L-theanine • Glycine • Adaptogens • Phosphatidylserine

This tool supports clinical reasoning and does not diagnose disease or replace individualized medical evaluation.