
**Traditional Chinese medicine —
Vocabulary for diagnostics —**

**Part 1:
Tongue**

*Médecine traditionnelle chinoise — Vocabulaire pour les
diagnostics —*

Partie 1: Langue

STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 23961-1:2021



STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 23961-1:2021



COPYRIGHT PROTECTED DOCUMENT

© ISO 2021

All rights reserved. Unless otherwise specified, or required in the context of its implementation, no part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized otherwise in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, or posting on the internet or an intranet, without prior written permission. Permission can be requested from either ISO at the address below or ISO's member body in the country of the requester.

ISO copyright office
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11
Email: copyright@iso.org
Website: www.iso.org

Published in Switzerland

Contents

	Page
Foreword.....	iv
Introduction.....	v
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Terms related to tongue body	2
5 Terms related to tongue coating	8
Annex A (informative) Typical tongue images	12
Annex B (informative) Tongue diagnosis terms — Chinese, Japanese and Korean characters	29
Bibliography.....	35

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 249, *Traditional Chinese medicine*.

A list of all parts in the ISO 23961 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Traditional Chinese medicine has become increasingly popular all over the world. Traditional Chinese medicine education has developed rapidly. Traditional Chinese medicine has obtained legal status in the United States, Singapore, Australia, Thailand and other countries and regions. Academic activities of traditional Chinese medicine are increasingly active. International communication of traditional Chinese medicine and medical activities, scientific research, management rules and regulations are in urgent need of International Standards.

First, standardized terminology is essential to standardized products and services. Traditional Chinese medicine diagnostic devices are one of the important contents of traditional Chinese medicine diagnosis. This document aims to encourage improvement of tongue-equipment-related industrial and research fields. All traditional Chinese medicine tongue diagnostic instrument can use the same vocabulary, which is very important for international trade and communication. With standardized terminology, the versatility of tongue-equipment-related products or service can be improved to benefit international technical cooperation.

Secondly, the use of standardized terminology in diagnosis helps to avoid confusion among researchers in the field of tongue diagnosis. But more importantly, the use of standardized terminology in tongue diagnosis also helps manufacturers to deliver standardized meaning with measured tongue images for products. Considering the close association between the traditional Chinese medicine diagnosis and diagnostic medical devices, it is not only necessary but also urgent to standardize the diagnostic terminologies.

Third, the purpose of the project is for the use of traditional Chinese medicine diagnostic instruments and artificial intelligence (AI) medicine. As internet-based medicine is developing very quickly, a standardized terminology is not only important for computerized information but also necessary for successful communication between physicians and patients from different countries. With advances in AI, medical AI doctors also need standardized terminology.

Therefore, it is necessary to standardize tongue diagnostic terminology, which will bring benefits to scholars, governments and enterprises all over the world.

STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 23961-1:2021

Traditional Chinese medicine — Vocabulary for diagnostics —

Part 1: Tongue

1 Scope

This document specifies the basic terminology and classification of tongue diagnostic methods. Each term of tongue diagnosis includes the English name, the classical Chinese characters and its definition.

The classification structure of tongue diagnosis terms is shown in Figure 1.

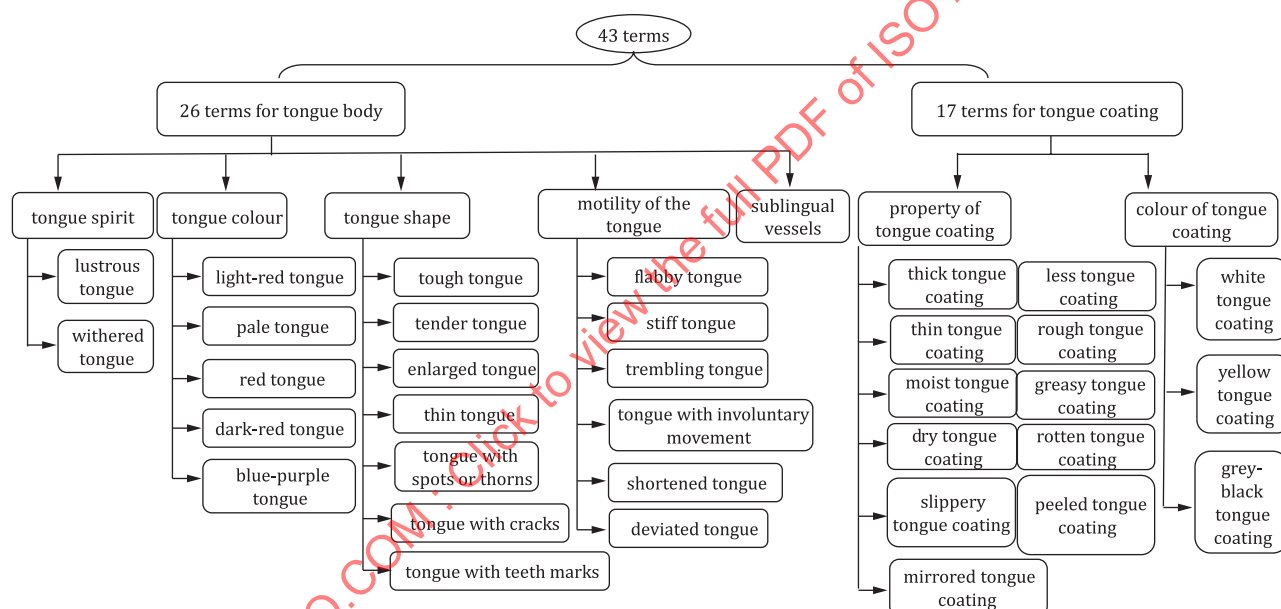


Figure 1 — Classification structure of tongue diagnosis terms

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

tongue diagnosis

diagnosis through inspection of the size, shape, colour and moisture of the tongue body and its coating, which helps with understanding the physiological functions and pathological changes of the body

3.2

tongue tip

frontal end of the tongue body

3.3

tongue centre

middle part of the tongue body

3.4

tongue root

back part of the tongue

3.5

tongue edge

bilateral edge of the dorsal surface of the tongue

3.6

tongue midline groove

vertical groove in the midline of the tongue body

3.7

lingual frenum

vertical fold in the midline of the bottom of the tongue

3.8

tongue papillae

layer of semi-transparent mucosa and tiny projections on the mucosal fold on the tongue surface

4 Terms related to tongue body

4.1

tongue body

舌體

tongue muscles and vessels

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Xing Se Wai Zhen Jian Mo* (《形色外診簡摩》).

Note 2 to entry: *The Zhong Yi She Zhen* (《中醫舌診》, *Traditional Chinese Medicine Tongue Diagnosis*) states, "The tongue body refers to the musculature of the tongue, including lingual mucosa, intrinsic muscles and extrinsic muscles." *The Bian She Zhi Nan* (《辨舌指南》, *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions*) states, "The tongue body refers to the muscles of the tongue."

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.1](#).

4.1.1

tongue spirit

舌神

general vitality of the tongue manifest in its moisture, lustre and flexibility

Note 1 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.1](#).

4.1.1.1

lustrous tongue

榮舌

tongue that is red, luxuriant and moist, with flexible movement

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A lustrous tongue is moist and lustrous."

Note 3 to entry: A typical lustrous tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.1.1](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.1.1](#).

4.1.1.2

withered tongue

枯舌

tongue that is dry, dull, lustreless and grey-dark with inflexible movement

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Shang Han Zhi Zhang* (《傷寒指掌》, *A Handbook on Cold Damage*).

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A withered tongue is dry and has no spirit."

Note 3 to entry: A typical withered tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.1.2](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.1.2](#).

4.1.2

tongue colour

舌色

visual hue of the tongue body

Note 1 to entry: The five tongue colours are light-red, pale, red, dark-red and blue-purple.

Note 2 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao Shi Shang Han Jin Jing Lu* (《敖氏傷寒金鏡錄》, *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*).

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.2](#).

4.1.2.1

light-red tongue

淡紅舌

tongue with redness hidden in the whiteness

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Traditional Chinese Medicine Tongue Diagnosis* states, "A light-red tongue is pale red, moist and lustrous. It indicates normal functioning of the heart in dominating blood vessels and of the stomach in moistening the tongue."

Note 3 to entry: A typical light-red tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.2.1](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.2.1](#).

4.1.2.2

pale tongue

淡白舌

tongue lighter or less red than a normal tongue

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Traditional Chinese Medicine Tongue Diagnosis* states, "A pale tongue appears more whitish and less red, or even entirely without red colour." *The She Tai Tong Zhi* (《舌胎統誌》, *Outlines of Tongue Coating*) states, "A pale tongue is usually seen in pathological conditions. It is paler than a normal tongue and slightly redder than a withered white tongue."

Note 3 to entry: A typical pale tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.2.2](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.2.2](#).

4.1.2.3

red tongue

紅舌

tongue redder than a normal tongue

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Traditional Chinese Medicine Tongue Diagnosis* states, "Light-red is the normal tongue colour. A red tongue is deeper than normal colour. It can be fresh red or dark red." *The She Zhen Yuan Jian* (《舌診源鑒》, *The Source and Differentiation of the Tongue Conditions*) states, "A red tongue is redder and deeper than a normal light-red tongue, appearing red like blood."

Note 3 to entry: A typical red tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.2.3](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.2.3](#).

4.1.2.4

dark-red tongue

絳舌

tongue deep red in colour

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Outlines of Tongue Coating* states, "A dark-red tongue appears crimson, just like the colour of the fire." *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A dark-red tongue is deep red." *The Source and Differentiation of the Tongue Conditions* states, "A dark-red tongue is darker than a red tongue, appearing cinnabar."

Note 3 to entry: A typical dark-red tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.2.4](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.2.4](#).

4.1.2.5

blue-purple tongue

青紫舌

tongue appearing bluish or purple in the whole tongue or parts of the tongue

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Traditional Chinese Medicine Tongue Diagnosis* states, "A blue or purple tongue is pale-blue or pale-purple and moist."

Note 3 to entry: A typical blue-purple tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.2.5](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.2.5](#).

4.1.3

tongue shape

舌形

shape of the tongue body

Note 1 to entry: Tongue shape includes such aspects as tough or tender, enlarged or thin, spots or thorns, cracks and teeth marks.

Note 2 to entry: The first origin is *The Handbook on Cold Damage*.

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.3](#).

4.1.3.1

tough tongue

老舌

tongue with a rough or crimped texture

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: A typical tough tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.3.1](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.3.1](#).

4.1.3.2 tender tongue

嫩舌

tongue with a delicate and fine texture

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: A typical tender tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.3.2](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.3.2](#).

4.1.3.3 enlarged tongue

胖大舌

tongue that is bigger and thicker than a normal tongue

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Wan Jin Zhi Bao* (《萬金至寶》).

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "An enlarged tongue is so swollen and enlarged that it cannot be extended out of the mouth." *The Wan Jin Zhi Bao* states, "An enlarged tongue is just like the swim bladder."

Note 3 to entry: A typical enlarged tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.3.3](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.3.3](#).

4.1.3.4 thin tongue

瘦薄舌

tongue that is smaller and thinner than a normal tongue

Note 1 to entry: A typical thin tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.3.4](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.3.4](#).

4.1.3.5 tongue with spots or thorns

點刺舌

tongue with red or purple stars (bigger ones) or spots (smaller ones) as well as awn-shaped thorns higher above the tongue surface

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage* states, "A red-star tongue refers to the tongue with big red spots." *The Shang Han She Jian* (《傷寒舌鑒》, *Differentiation of the Tongue Conditions in Exogenous Febrile Diseases*) states, "Sometimes the tongue may have big red stars (bigger ones) or big red spots (smaller ones); sometimes the tongue may have red or purple thorns."

Note 3 to entry: A typical tongue with spots and thorns image is shown in [Figure A.2.3.5](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.3.5](#).

4.1.3.6 tongue with cracks

裂紋舌

tongue with a variety of shallow or deep cracks

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Cha She Bian Zheng Xin Fa* (《察舌辨癥新法》, *New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation*) states, “A tongue with cracks may have sagittal straight grooves on the surface of the tongue, just like imprinted by the back of a knife blade. Sometimes, the tongue may have transverse cracks on the surface of the tongue.” *The She Jian Bian Zheng* (《舌鑒辨正》, *Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation*) states, “A cracked tongue may have herringbone fissures.” *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, “Cracks on the surface of the tongue may resemble the shapes of Chinese characters ‘人’, ‘川’ and ‘爻’, or sometimes just like straight grooves.”

Note 3 to entry: A typical tongue with cracks image is shown in [Figure A.2.3.6](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.3.6](#).

4.1.3.7

tongue with teeth marks

齒痕舌

tongue with dental indentations at the edges

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, “A tongue with teeth marks means there are teeth marks at both sides of the tongue.”

Note 3 to entry: A typical tongue with teeth marks image is shown in [Figure A.2.3.7](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.3.7](#).

4.1.4

motility of the tongue

舌態

ability of the tongue to move spontaneously

Note 1 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.4](#)

4.1.4.1

flabby tongue

痿軟舌

tongue that is limp, wilting and cannot extend or retract freely

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Differentiation of the Tongue Conditions in Exogenous Febrile Diseases*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Differentiation of the Tongue Conditions in Exogenous Febrile Diseases* states, “A flabby tongue is floppy, soft and unable to move flexibly.” *The Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation* states, “A flabby tongue is floppy, soft and unable to move flexibly.”

Note 3 to entry: A typical flabby tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.4.1](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.4.1](#).

4.1.4.2

stiff tongue

強硬舌

tongue that is unable to do flexion, extension or rotation

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation*.

Note 2 to entry: *The New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation* states, “A stiff tongue is unable to move flexibly, coupled with slurred speech.”

Note 3 to entry: A typical stiff tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.4.2](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.4.2](#).

4.1.4.3**deviated tongue**

歪斜舌

tongue that inclines to either the left side or the right side when extended

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A deviated tongue is deviated towards either the left or right."

Note 3 to entry: A typical deviated tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.4.3](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.4.3](#).

4.1.4.4**trembling tongue**

顫動舌

tongue that quivers or twitches uncontrollably

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Differentiation of the Tongue Conditions in Exogenous Febrile Diseases*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Differentiation of the Tongue Conditions in Exogenous Febrile Diseases* states, "A trembling tongue quivers or twitches uncontrollably." *The Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation* states, "A trembling tongue keeps quivering or twitching uncontrollably." *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A trembling tongue uncontrollably quivers or twitches."

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.4.4](#).

4.1.4.5**tongue with involuntary movement**

吐弄舌

pathological condition in which the tongue extends out of the mouth and does not retract for a long period of time or a playful tongue that is extended and licks the lips (and then is quickly retracted)

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Yi Zong Jin Jian* (《醫宗金鑑》).

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A tongue with involuntary movement includes the following two conditions: a protruding tongue that is extended out of the mouth and not retracted for a long period of time and a playful tongue that is extended and licks the lips (and then is quickly retracted)." *The Yi Zong Jin Jian* states, "Tongue with involuntary movement is extended out of the mouth but not retracted for a long period of time." *The Differentiation of the Tongue Conditions in Exogenous Febrile Diseases* states, "A playful tongue is repeatedly extended and quickly retracted." *The Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation* states, "... So the tongue is frequently extended out of the mouth and quickly retracted, or sometimes it repeatedly licks the lips, corners of the mouth and nasal tip."

Note 3 to entry: Typical tongue with involuntary movement images are shown in [Figure A.2.4.4](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.4.5](#).

4.1.4.6**shortened tongue**

短縮舌

tongue that is contracted with a tightened tongue frenum and unable to extend out of the mouth

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation*.

Note 2 to entry: *The New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation* states, "A shortened tongue is unable to extend out of the mouth." *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A shortened tongue is contracted with tightened tongue frenum and unable to extend out of the mouth."

Note 3 to entry: A typical shortened tongue image is shown in [Figure A.2.4.5](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.4.6](#).

4.1.5

sublingual vessels

舌下絡脈

big vertical vessels on the two sides of the lingual frenum, which are pale purple

Note 1 to entry: A typical sublingual vessels image can be seen in [Figure A.2.5](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see [B.1.5](#).

5 Terms related to tongue coating

5.1

tongue coating

舌苔

fur-like substance covering the tongue body

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Handbook on Cold Damage* states, "The tongue coating is just like lichen. Lichen grows on damp surfaces. The tongue coating is engendered by stomach qi steaming water and grains transformed by the spleen."

Note 3 to entry: A typical tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.2](#).

5.1.1

property of tongue coating

苔質

texture and form of tongue coating

Note 1 to entry: Properties include such aspects as thinness or thickness, moistening or dryness, greasiness or rottenness, peeling.

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1](#).

5.1.1.1

thick tongue coating

厚苔

tongue coating through which one cannot see the tongue body

Note 1 to entry: A typical thick tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.1](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.1](#).

5.1.1.2

thin tongue coating

薄苔

tongue coating through which one can see the tongue body

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: A typical thin tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.2](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.2](#).

5.1.1.3

less tongue coating

少苔

excessively small or scanty tongue coating

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Traditional Chinese Medicine Tongue Diagnosis*.

Note 2 to entry: A typical less tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.3](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.3](#).

5.1.1.4

moist tongue coating

潤苔

moderately moistened tongue coating

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A moist tongue coating indicates sufficient body fluids."

Note 3 to entry: A typical moist tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.4](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.4](#).

5.1.1.5

slippery tongue coating

滑苔

tongue coating that looks watery and wet

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A slippery tongue coating is wet, indicating sufficient body fluids."

Note 3 to entry: A typical slippery tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.5](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.5](#).

5.1.1.6

dry tongue coating

燥苔

tongue coating with scanty fluids

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, "A dry tongue coating indicates insufficient body fluids"; "A dry tongue coating is dry with scanty fluids."

Note 3 to entry: A typical dry tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.6](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.6](#).

5.1.1.7

rough tongue coating

糙苔

tongue coating that feels coarse when touched

Note 1 to entry: A typical rough tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.7](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.7](#).

5.1.1.8

greasy tongue coating

膩苔

tongue coating containing small and thin granules sticking on the tongue surface, which are not easy to scrape off

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, “A greasy tongue coating has roots and cannot be scraped away.” *The She Zhen Yan Jiu* (《舌診研究》, *Research on Tongue Diagnosis*) states, “When you observe a greasy tongue coating with a magnifying glass, you can see that the number and branches of the filiform papillae increase, including saliva and food residues.” *The New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation* states, “A thick and greasy tongue coating is thick in the centre but thin on the sides, without pores and loose granules. A thick and greasy tongue cannot be scraped away.”

Note 3 to entry: A typical greasy tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.8](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.8](#).

5.1.1.9

rotten tongue coating

腐苔

tongue coating containing big, loose and thick granules staying on the tongue surface, which is easy to scrape off

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Guide to Differentiation of Tongue Conditions* states, “A rotten tongue coating has no roots and can be easily scraped away.” *The Fu Xie Xin Shu* (《伏邪新書》) states, “A rotten tongue coating is just like residue of soy bean curd...” *The Yi Yuan* (《醫原》, *The Origin of Traditional Chinese Medicine*) states, “A rotten tongue coating is loose and not sticky.” *The New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation* states, “A rotten tongue coating is just like being covered with a layer of residue of soy bean curd.”

Note 3 to entry: A typical rotten tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.9](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.9](#).

5.1.1.10

peeled tongue coating

花剝苔

tongue coating that is partially peeled off

Note 1 to entry: A typical peeled tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.10](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.10](#).

5.1.1.11

mirrored tongue coating

光剝苔

tongue coating that is completely peeled off

Note 1 to entry: A typical mirrored tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.1.11](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.1.11](#).

5.1.2

colour of tongue coating

苔色

visual hue of tongue coating

Note 1 to entry: The three tongue coating colours are white, yellow and grey-black.

Note 2 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.2](#).

5.1.2.1

white tongue coating

白苔

tongue coating white in colour

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: A typical white tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.2.1](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 3 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.2.1](#).

5.1.2.2

yellow tongue coating

黄苔

tongue coating yellow in colour

Note 1 to entry: Yellow tongue coatings include light-yellow, deep-yellow and brown-yellow.

Note 2 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 3 to entry: *The New Methods in Syndrome Differentiation through Tongue Observation* states, "A yellow tongue coating varies in the colour depth and the degree of wetness. It can be deep yellow, brown yellow, yellow like fried immature orange, yellow and black like the scorched pan, bright yellow, yellow like the yellow teeth, gray-bluish-yellow, yellow like being coloured by the corn, yellow like the striped tiger, yellow like beeswax, yellow like being coloured by the yolk, yellow like the fried residue of soy bean curd."

Note 4 to entry: A typical yellow tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.2.2](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 5 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.2.2](#).

5.1.2.3

grey-black tongue coating

灰黑苔

tongue coating grey-black in colour

Note 1 to entry: The first origin is *The Ao's Golden Mirror Records for Cold Damage*.

Note 2 to entry: *The Si Zhen Jue Wei* (《四診訣微》, *Four Diagnostic Methods in Traditional Chinese Medicine*) states, "A gray tongue coating is the mild case of black tongue coating."

Note 3 to entry: A typical grey-black tongue coating image is shown in [Figure A.3.2.3](#) in [Annex A](#).

Note 4 to entry: For further information, see [B.2.2.3](#).

Annex A **(informative)**

Typical tongue images

A.1 Acquisition device for tongue images

These typical tongue images were acquired using a Smart TCM-I type tongue diagnostic instrument. This instrument conforms to ISO 20498-1 and ISO 20498-2.

The purpose of this annex is to give users a straightforward understanding of tongue terminology and compare tongue differences, rather than standardizing each tongue image.

A.2 Tongue body

A.2.1 Tongue spirit

A.2.1.1 Lustrous tongue



Figure A.2.1.1 — A lustrous tongue

A.2.1.2 Withered tongue



Figure A.2.1.2 — A withered tongue

A.2.2 Tongue colour

A.2.2.1 Light-red tongue



Figure A.2.2.1 — A light-red tongue

A.2.2.2 Pale tongue



Figure A.2.2.2 — A pale tongue

A.2.2.3 Red tongue



Figure A.2.2.3 — A red tongue

A.2.2.4 Dark-red tongue



Figure A.2.2.4 — A dark-red tongue

A.2.2.5 Blue-purple tongue



Figure A.2.2.5 — A blue-purple tongue

A.2.3 Tongue shape

A.2.3.1 Tough tongue



Figure A.2.3.1 — A tough tongue

A.2.3.2 Tender tongue



Figure A.2.3.2 — A tender tongue

A.2.3.3 Enlarged tongue

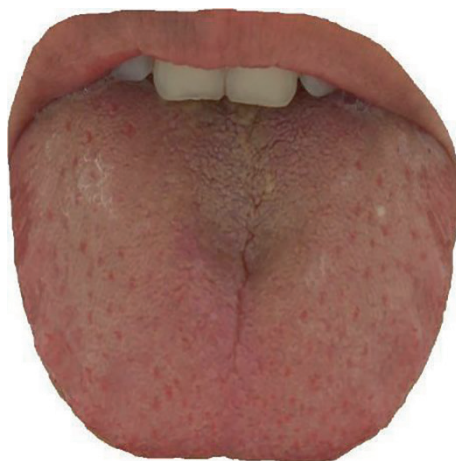


Figure A.2.3.3 — An enlarged tongue

A.2.3.4 Thin tongue



Figure A.2.3.4 — A thin tongue

A.2.3.5 Tongue with spots or thorns

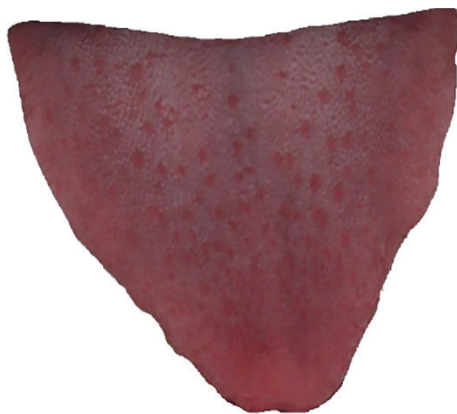


Figure A.2.3.5 — A tongue with spots or thorns

A.2.3.6 Tongue with cracks



Figure A.2.3.6 — A tongue with cracks

A.2.3.7 Tongue with teeth marks



Figure A.2.3.7 — A tongue with teeth marks

A.2.4 The motility of the tongue

A.2.4.1 Flabby tongue



Figure A.2.4.1 — A flabby tongue

A.2.4.2 Stiff tongue



Figure A.2.4.2 — A stiff tongue

A.2.4.3 Deviated tongue

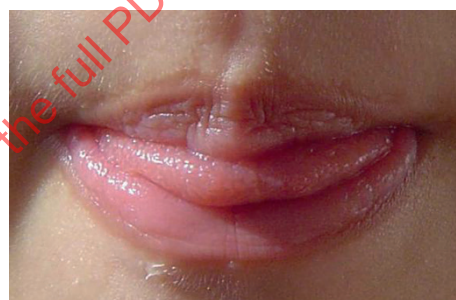


Figure A.2.4.3 — A deviated tongue

A.2.4.4 Tongue with involuntary movement



a)



b)

Figure A.2.4.4 — A tongue with involuntary movement

A.2.4.5 Shortened tongue



Figure A.2.4.5 — A shortened tongue

A.2.5 Sublingual vessels



Figure A.2.5 — Sublingual vessels

A.3 Tongue coating



Figure A.3 — Tongue coating

A.3.1 The property of tongue coating

A.3.1.1 Thick tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.1 — Thick tongue coating

A.3.1.2 Thin tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.2 — Thin tongue coating

A.3.1.3 Less tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.3 — Less tongue coating

A.3.1.4 Moist tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.4 — Moist tongue coating

A.3.1.5 Slippery tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.5 — Slippery tongue coating

A.3.1.6 Dry tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.6 — Dry tongue coating

A.3.1.7 Rough tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.7 — Rough tongue coating

A.3.1.8 Greasy tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.8 — Greasy tongue coating

A.3.1.9 Rotten tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.9 — Rotten tongue coating

A.3.1.10 Peeled tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.10 — Peeled tongue coating

A.3.1.11 Mirrored tongue coating



Figure A.3.1.11 — Mirrored tongue coating

A.3.2 Tongue coating colour

A.3.2.1 White tongue coating



Figure A.3.2.1 — White tongue coating

A.3.2.2 Yellow tongue coating



Figure A.3.2.2 — Yellow tongue coating

A.3.2.3 Grey-black tongue coating



Figure A.3.2.3 — Grey-black tongue coating

STANDARDSISO.COM : Click to view the full PDF of ISO 23961-1:2021

Annex B (informative)

Tongue diagnosis terms — Chinese, Japanese and Korean characters

B.1 Tongue body

Chinese characters: 舌体 (shé tǐ)

Japanese characters: 舌体 (ぜったい, zet tai)

Korean characters: 설질 (seol jil)

B.1.1 Tongue spirit

Chinese characters: 舌神 (shé shén)

Japanese characters: 舌神 (ぜっしん, zes shin)

Korean characters: 설신 (seol sin)

B.1.1.1 Lustrous tongue

Chinese characters: 荣舌 (róng shé)

Japanese characters: 荣舌 (えいぜつ, ei zetsu)

Korean characters: 영설 (yeong seol)

B.1.1.2 Withered tongue

Chinese characters: 枯舌 (kū shé)

Japanese characters: 枯舌 (こぜつ, ko zetsu)

Korean characters: 고설 (go seol)

B.1.2 Tongue colour

Chinese characters: 舌色 (shé sè)

Japanese characters: 舌色 (ぜっしょく, zes shoku)

Korean characters: 혀의색 (seol saek)

B.1.2.1 Light-red tongue

Chinese characters: 淡红舌 (dàn hóng shé)

Japanese characters: 淡紅舌 (たんこうぜつ, tan kou zetsu)

Korean characters: 담홍설 (dam hong seol)