

Examples of such forces include voodoo, witchcraft, or evil spirits. Belief in the “evil eye” is another example of this. It stems from a belief in health as a state of balance and illness as a state of imbalance. As long as an individual's strength and weakness remain in balance, he or she is unlikely to become a victim of the evil eye. Weaknesses are not necessarily physical. For example, an excess of some emotion, such as envy, can create weakness. Infants and small children, because of immature development of their internal strength-weakness states, are especially vulnerable to the gaze of the evil eye.

### **Imbalance of Forces**

The concept of balance or equilibrium is widespread throughout the world. One of the most common imbalances is the one between “hot” and “cold.” This belief derived from the ancient Greek concept of body humors, which states that illness is caused by imbalance of the four humors. Such imbalance is thought to cause internal damage or altered function. Treatment of the illness is directed at restoring balance. The hot and cold understanding of disease is based in this concept. Diseases, areas of the body, foods, and illnesses are classified as either “hot” or “cold.” Foods and beverages are designated hot or cold based on the effect they exert, not their actual temperature. In Chinese health belief, the forces are termed yin (cold) and yang (hot) ([Spector, 2009](#)).

Health care workers who are aware of this belief are better able to understand why some persons refuse to eat certain foods. It is often useful to discuss the diet with the family to determine their beliefs regarding food choices. It is possible to help families devise a diet that contains the necessary balance of basic food groups prescribed by the medical subculture while conforming to the beliefs of the ethnic subculture. By determining a family's preferences during well-child visits or prior to discharge, the nurse can help prevent any adverse effects.

### **Health Practices**

Cultures have numerous similarities regarding prevention and treatment of illness. Folk healers are powerful members of the community and can acquire information about an illness without