

中華養生周



Chinese Wellbeing Week

Top 10 Tips for keeping healthy with Chinese Traditional Medicine philosophy

Tip 1: Protect your feet. Wash them with hot water before you nod off and keep them warm and wrapped up.

Feet are regarded as “the second heart” of the body. On your feet are so many reflections of your internal organs and the tissues of the body. So massaging them regularly is a must. It will improve circulation of both your qi (energy) and your blood. Massage them before you go to bed in bowl of hot water. This will have the additional benefit of helping you sleep better. Feet must also be kept warm, especially in winter, as according to TCM, they are related to the kidneys. Our kidneys are believed to be the source of yin and yang for the whole body, which keeps our bodies in balance.

Tip 2: Change your sleeping pattern with the seasons

“Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise”. Is this correct?

TCM contains a set of rules governing the timing of going to bed and getting up based on the relationship between nature and humans. In Springtime, it advises us to go to bed early and rise early; in the Summer to go to bed later than usual but still rise early; in Autumn, to go to bed early and rise early; in Winter, to go to bed early and to rise late. The reason for going to bed late in summer is because if we go to bed early, the heat of the season will penetrate our bodies while we are not on guard, which can cause health problems known as “hot diseases” in TCM. While the reason for staying in bed longer than usual during the winter is exactly opposite. If we rise before the sun, we have to cope with the cold when we are least prepared to do so, having just got out of a warm bed, which will lead to “cold diseases” and drains our energy reserves.

Tip 3: Go for a walk after dinner

A Chinese proverb says: “if you wish to live to the age of 99, please walk 100 steps after each meal”.

Walking has been a good way of keeping healthy since ancient times. This is because walking helps improve bowel movement. This in turn shortens the time it takes for food to enter the small intestine, promotes digestion and absorption of food, and prevents stomach and intestinal disorders.

Walking is beneficial to all age groups but especially for middle-aged and elderly people, as it is a relaxing form of exercise. It is good for those who are physically weakened and ill as well as desk-bound staff!

Suggestion: Walk daily but when you get the chance go to an area of great natural beauty and breathe in the fresh air. This has the added benefit of aiding the whole body especially the muscles, joints, heart, and respiratory and nervous systems.

Tip 4: Don't get up as soon as you hear the alarm!

Should we get up with the alarm clock or hit snooze? According to TCM, when you wake up in the morning, do not jump out of the bed right away, even if you are running late and have an important appointment. It is better to stay in bed for a few more minutes, opening your eyes until you are mentally and physically prepared to get up. This practice was advocated by the ancient Chinese on the ground that getting up abruptly in the morning will hurt your vital qi. The ancient Chinese also believe it could induce heart disease and the common cold. This is because the human body and mind both need a period of transition from one status to another. So that internal qi can be preserved and the yin yang balance maintained.

Tip 5: Don't indulge in too much rest.

TCM calls diseases caused by excessive rest “disease of ease”.

TCM regards all excessive acts, whether resting, sitting, lying, being full of sorrow or joy, as harmful. An old Chinese saying goes: “life springs from sorrow and calamity, and death from ease and pleasure.” Apart from excessive ease and rest wearing down our will, it can also negatively impact on our qi according to the TCM theory, as it says: “lying for a long time can impair qi”.

Suggestion: When you are feeling lethargic get up and move your body by doing some simple exercises.

Tip 6: Keep your emotions in balance

According to TCM there are 7 emotions: joy, anger, pensiveness, worry, sadness, fear and fright. TCM states that joy is related to the heart, anger is related to the liver, pensiveness comes from the spleen, worry impairs the spleen and the lungs, sadness harms the lungs and fear and fright both affect the kidneys.

If we allow our emotions to constantly run away with us, illness and disease may follow; we all know what it is like to get over excited during the day and find ourselves unable to sleep at night. Insomnia is a dysfunction of the heart in TCM. So do not allow yourself to let your emotions go into over-drive.

Suggestion: When your emotions overwhelm you, remember to breathe deeply to exert a calming influence over your body and emotions.

Tip 7: Give your head an early morning massage to brighten your day and face.

After getting out of bed, rub and pull your ears gently with both hands. Then rub your scalp and comb your hair with your fingers. After this rub your two hands together until they are warm. Lastly wipe your face with warm hands, in an up and down motion for 10-20 times. This massage stimulates the circulation of qi and blood in the face. This will brighten your face, keep hair from greying and prevent diseases.

Tip 8: Eat your way to healthy skin

In order to prevent facial skin from early aging, we should pay attention to the nutritional balance of our diet and eat more food that is beneficial to the skin. From the perspective of TCM, to practise a diet related to beauty principles, we should follow the dos and don'ts of health preservation.

Ancient books on TCM have recorded that many kinds of food preserve beautifulness such as sesame, honey, fragrant mushroom, cow's milk, goat milk, sea cucumber, pumpkin seed, lotus root, Chinese wax gourd, cherry, and wheat. Modern scientific experiments have proved that the above-mentioned food is rich in vitamins, enzymes, minerals, and amino acids. The above food makes facial skin delicate, bright and rosy, and extends its lifespan.

Tip 9: Eat Pumpkin to detoxify

In TCM theory, pumpkin can be used as a medicine as it is warm in property, sweet in flavour, and enters into the spleen and stomach meridians. It functions to supplement qi (energy), detoxify the body and relieve pain.

Explained by western medical theory, pumpkin contains rich pectin and can absorb bacteria and toxic substances, including heavy metals, such as lead. Thus it plays an important role in detoxification. Meanwhile, the pectin can protect the stomach from to reduce the ulcer.

Suggestions: Make pumpkin soup, pumpkin pie or serve as a vegetable portion.

Tip 10: Eat spinach to resolve strengthen your blood and relieve constipation.

Spinach, sweet in flavour and cool in nature, moistens dryness and is beneficial to the stomach and intestines which in turn can help resolve constipation. Spinach aid digestion and is rich in cellulose so it can also help improve movement in the bowels.

However, the oxalic acid content is high in spinach, which prevents calcium absorption, so you should avoid cooking it with tofu, seaweed and other foods with high calcium. Should you wish to cook spinach with these foods you just need to lightly boil the spinach in water for a short time before cooking to get rid of oxalic acid.