

STAYING HEALTHY WITH ORIENTAL MEDICINE

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1. TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF.

Vibrant health, continuing throughout one's lifetime, requires certain efforts on your part. Foremost, of course, is a clean, low fat diet. The American diet is 40% fat, compared with a Chinese and Japanese counterpart of 5%. This fat originates not only in excessive dairy, but also in greasy and oily foods. High fat accounts for the large incidence of heart disease and stroke in America, and provides a harmful terrain leading to organ degeneration and eventually cancer. One's diet should be rich in complex carbohydrates, vegetables, and fruits, and, for many, low-fat animal protein like chicken, fish and eggs. The empty calories of junk food, pastries, and sugars harm the digestion, and lead to obesity.

Also important is exercise, specifically heart strengthening aerobics requiring at least 20 minutes of exertion with sweating, 3 times per week. Exercises that stimulate lymphatic circulation and exercise the lungs are also important.

The Chinese idea of exercise has a different orientation than the western approach of strengthening the heart and lungs. In Chinese exercise, emphasis is put on keeping the joints and tendons limber, regulating organs through self-massage, and enriching the *qi* circulation in the acupuncture meridians. These exercises are collectively called *Qi Gong*, or energy exercises, and are practiced by millions of people in China on a regular basis.

Next, emotional health and harmony is necessary for a long and healthy life. This requires the minimization of stress in one's daily activities. Stress may be responsible in 80% of chronic disease, and can be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. Oriental cultures have minimized stress by cultivating meditation and centering techniques. Cultivating one's center means developing a personal and experiential connection to the higher energetic and spiritual properties of the universe. It is certainly effective in controlling and minimizing stress in one's daily life, even in these modern and fast times.

Finally, optimal health requires minimizing exposure to certain environmental toxins. These include pesticides and food additives, electro-magnetic fields, and certain pharmaceutical drugs, especially antibiotics. Antibiotics (“against life”) destroy hundreds of beneficial and necessary gut bacteria, as well as damage the body’s immune system. Repeated usage can lead to intestinal permeability, overloading the liver with dangerous toxins.

2. USING OTHERS TO HELP YOU.

Health care providers of course are there to treat acute and chronic disorders with effective natural medicines and techniques. They are also available for fine-tuning your body’s various systems and maximizing your health potential. Effective therapies include massage, chiropractic, and acupuncture, and in an ideal situation, one would avail oneself of each, once monthly.

Acupuncture has a profound effect on circulation of *qi* (energy) and blood, and directly affects organ health and function, fascial tension and structural balance. The most efficient use of acupuncture is the Japanese style known as meridian therapy. In meridian therapy, acupuncture channels are evaluated, through pulse and abdomen palpation, for unnatural excesses or deficiencies. These are corrected with a minimum number of needles, using superficial insertion. Once the basic imbalances have been corrected (known as the root treatment), a second stage, related to one’s individual complaints, is given (the branch treatment). This combination is very effective in dealing with acute and serious conditions. More importantly, when done about once monthly, it is effective in preventing disease and disorder from taking root. That is, it embodies the concept of prevention at its highest and most accessible level.

One can also benefit from a health professional for evaluation of herbal and nutritional supplementation. This is especially important for ongoing complaints of a deeper nature, and is most effective when evaluated monthly.

Staying healthy is a balance of doing things for yourself, on a regular basis, and availing yourself of the health skills and expertise of others. I have been in practice since 1978, and have steadily worked to improve my skills and increase my knowledge in Oriental medicine, with the single goal of helping my patients. In this regard, my deepest belief is that we are all intrinsically healthy and vibrant, and that disease and dysfunction is temporary, and treatable.