

# Traditional Chinese Medicine

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The theory and practice of natural health care has had a long history that dates back to the very beginning of Chinese civilization, with both healthcare and longevity being amongst the most recurring themes with all aspects of life. Oriental culture focuses on the study and improvement of human beings themselves, with a keen awareness of the value of good health. It is with this in mind, that constant efforts are made in order to maintain and improve it.

The one outstanding feature of traditional Chinese medicine is that it is preventative in nature. An ancient text called the *Yellow Emperor's Classics of Internal Medicine* clearly states: "To apply medicine to disease after it is already developed, or to suppress a revolt which is well expanded, is like digging a well when one already feels thirsty, or to forge weapons when a war has already started. Don't you think it is too late?"

The constant effort of disease prevention means that the whole body system is kept at a high level of health. In fact, prevention of disease and the promotion of health is in essence the same process. When we speak of health, we first and foremost speak of the absence of disease; therefore health is best promoted by keeping disease at bay.

Regular exercise on a daily basis is essential to maintaining and promoting health. An eminent doctor Hua Tuo once said towards the end of the second century: "Running



water never gets stagnant, and a door-hinge never gets worm-eaten. For the same reason, by regularly exercising ourselves, we can maintain health and keep disease at bay. Regular exercise promotes blood and Qi (energy) circulation and thus keeps the body in high alert".

A big difference in daily living and healthcare concerns between the East and the West is the topic of diet. I was surprised to see that the typical Chinese diet in China was very much a healthy mix of vegetables, rice and little meat.

Upon my return to the US, I realized how much processed food and refined sugar we consume. No wonder there is such an issue here with obesity, weight loss and the corresponding health concerns. Dr. Sun Shimano (590-692 AD) of the Tang Dynasty used dietary therapy as the first consideration in attempting a cure. He wrote: "A truly good doctor first finds out the cause of a disease, and based on such findings he first tries to treat it with foods. Only when foods fail to produce the desired result does he resort to medication. In terms of nourishment, medication is inferior to food, food is inferior to essence, and essence is inferior to spirit."

He was one of the first to recognize how effective ordinary foods can be when prepared and used in the right way. We can see this in our daily lives, when we consume things that are good for us as opposed to foods, which are not good for us. The Chinese have always known that foods can both promote and damage health, and thus lead to longevity or an early death.

How you live your life is your business, but keep in mind, the healthier you are the better you will feel. It is never too late to start living a healthier life through the use of diet and exercise, even at an advanced age. It is always best to start an exercise program slowly,

and introduce new foods into your diet gradually. Many all over the world from young to old practice non-impact exercise like Tai Qi or Qi-Gong with health benefits noticed.