

## Men's Health and Chinese Medicine

27 June 2006 West Australian

What happens to men as they reach their fifties?

There are obvious changes in a male from 45 to 65. He changes physically with less skin tone, hair loss, decreased libido, weight gain, moodiness and lapses in concentration.

And then there is the "midlife crisis". Men will reassess their relationships, their work and themselves.

On top of these changes, there is an increasing risk of aging diseases including prostate problems and cardiovascular disease.

Chinese Medicine understands this period as the end of the first sixty years of your life. With a healthy lifestyle and without major illnesses, Chinese Medicine says we can live to 120 years. But the second sixty years require a different approach to everything.

The Four Aspects of Good Health according to Traditional Chinese Medicine offer a framework to achieve wellbeing as we age.

The first is diet. Moderation in all things is a well-known aphorism from many schools of thought. In Chinese Medicine it means eating regularly, three meals a day and snacks as needed. Missing meals and eating irregularly are a sure way to a decline in wellbeing.

In winter, food should be mostly cooked most of the time. Soups and stews are easy to digest and that warm feeling in the stomach tells you they are just what you need.

The second plank to the foundation of good health is exercise.

Recently I saw a definition of fitness in a small but valuable book by Greg Chappell. He said, you need to be fit enough to be able to do whatever you want to do. This sounds very much like Chinese Medicine advice.

You want to be able to do your everyday activities without aches and pains the following day and with energy to spare. So depending on your needs, you need an exercise regime that suits your needs.

For most of us, walking 20-30 minutes a day is the starting point. And that walk should be varied in pace and terrain. Variation leads to a more optimal fitness level.

As well as walking, some form of light weight training is essential to maintain muscle strength. This is not a full on weights workout, it could be 10 minutes every couple of days swinging a couple of moderate weights. And there are excellent classes for these exercises.

The Chinese achieve this weight training by doing exercises like Tai Ji Quan very slowly. It may look simple and easy, but 30 minutes of this type of exercise will give most muscles in the body a thorough workout.

As well as walking and weights, stretching is a must. Again it need not be a full production, 10 minutes a day may suffice for your needs.

The third plank is rest and relaxation. Eight hours sleep is the norm, but a little less may be your norm. Continuous irregularity in lifestyle will deplete your energy reserves and lead to more rapid aging.

Relaxation can be an enjoyable time with friends or a stroll on the beach at sunset. It could also be a five to twenty minute period of sitting or lying back and clearing your thoughts as you deeply relax.

The final plank in the plan for optimal health is attitude. As we age, our mental and emotional responses will change. A physical decline in health can be accompanied by a sense of depression.

As you have put effort into a healthy diet, exercise and relaxation, attitude also requires some thought. The second sixty years can be a gradual decline or an increasingly interesting and stimulating experience.

It is a matter of choosing to be the person you would like to be a little more each day.

Diet, exercise, rest and relaxation and attitude are the basics.

For those who have already developed the beginnings of aging and lifestyle diseases, act now to see to them.

For moderate to serious conditions you need to see your General Practitioner.

Once a diagnosis and treatment plan has been mapped out, then Chinese Medicine may be able to assist in strategies to overcome the illness.

Beyond this, Chinese Medicine offers a wealth of treatments to maintain and enhance wellbeing.

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