

HEALTH

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TCM

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Essence of life

According to Chinese philosophy, *jing* (essence) forms the basis for the whole body. Stored in the kidneys, *jing* serves as the "deposited capital" for all kinds of physiological functions.

For example, conception is made possible by the power of *jing*, maturing is the blossoming of *jing*, and ageing reflects the weakening of *jing*.

Every metabolic activity consumes *jing*, and we can either nourish or deplete it through

behaviour and lifestyle. When we're young, more *jing* is generated than consumed and the excess is stored in the kidneys.

An abundance of kidney *jing* promotes vitality and ensures the body's resistance. Over time, we stop producing excess *jing* and consume the reserves in the kidneys. This decline leads to weakness and is responsible for the body's natural ageing process.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) believes regular and harmonious life habits help store sufficient *jing* in the kidneys. People should attentively take care of physical and mental aspects at different life stages by actively adapting to the natural environment so as to keep an

optimal physiological state. This is an holistic approach to health and well-being.

Due to these concepts, there are some dos and don'ts in Chinese daily life. Firstly, eating a variety of food is important.

What is eaten should correspond to individual needs, seasonal changes, and the balance of food energies. This means eating food with a balance of cool and hot properties.

It's recommended to sleep at the *yin*-predominant time (night) while waking at the *yang*-predominant time (morning). A proper way to sleep is lying in an easterly direction, which helps to nourish the *yang*-most part of the body (the head) and is believed to refresh the mind.

Exercise regularly but to a

moderate degree, as overdoing it can impair the liver and kidneys since they rule the tendons and bones. It's also said that over-using the brain causes damage to the heart and spleen.

In TCM, clothing is not just for keeping warm, but also to protect against external pathogens. Elderly people should always wear at least one layer, since their relative physical weakness means they're vulnerable to external invasions.

Young people or children should wear fewer layers, as this can train them in cold resistance, which makes the skin and subcutaneous tissues firmer and smoother.

Lastly, living spaces should be comfortable, energetic and inspire creativity so it can

interact with the inhabitant's *chi* (energy). If the living space makes a person feel depressed and lethargic, people can seek advice from an expert in *fung shui* to restore harmony.

A wide variety of living approaches were developed by ancient sages in China. These have been handed down in the *Yang Sheng Fa* (Principles for Nourishing Life), which literally means knowing how to maintain and protect health, prevent disease and live a better life.

The Chinese practices encompass not just medical healing, but a way of multi-layered, integrated living.

Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner