



Tibb, a natural companion for ageing

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Everyone wants to lead a long, healthy and happy life, but no one wants to get old. The unspoken dread among many of those on the wrong side of fifty is becoming infirm, physically or mentally – or both. The increasing chance of forsaking our present quality of life to dread diseases such as cancer, heart disease and Alzheimer's intrudes more and more, and the inevitable loss of independence, respect and dignity stares us in the face. Many dread diseases are the outcome of a faulty lifestyle or poor personal habits. According to Tibb much can be done to head off and delay these changes, so protecting the quality of life. Key to these efforts is resisting the trend to the qualities of dryness and coldness that accompany ageing. The Tibb approach is three-fold: (a) adopt a healthier lifestyle; (b) support Physis, our inner power of self-healing; forsake damaging personal habits.

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Overview

The ageing populations of most developed, and many developing, countries are expanding rapidly, sometimes explosively. This imposes huge financial pressures on their healthcare services. As we get older we are more likely to succumb to one or more chronic disorders related to our lifestyle, especially food and physical activity. The quality of life of the ageing person inevitably goes downhill, and invariably imposes a real emotional and financial burden on their families for social care and drug treatment. It is therefore in our best interest to consider ways of fending off the ravages of ageing. The first step is recognising the potential of Tibb's key Lifestyle Factors, and how to benefit from making changes to them. The second step is to actively encourage our innate powers of self-healing, or Physis. The third step is to abandon or minimise personal bad habits. The final step is to practice certain hands-on and other health supporting practices like massage. These strategies do not guarantee a longer life, but they will ensure a better quality of life for the years remaining.

'Lifestyle' summarises the diet, behaviour and habits that a person chooses for his or her daily life.

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Tibb's view of ageing

What happens to us as we get older? Ibn Sina, a major pioneer of Tibb, thought that the heat and moisture qualities typical of our youth gradually subsides due to falling cellular respiration and dehydration, leading to the qualities dryness and coldness becoming predominant. Dehydration in cellular tissues, he noted, is "a sign of senescence".

As we age we are more likely to lack quality sleep, get anxious or depressed, become diabetic, have low-level infections, and succumb to dementias.

This change tends to favour the onset of many degenerative disorders such as osteoporosis and arthritis. For Tibb, this means that the balance in qualities of the three main organs – heart, brain and liver – has to be protected. The heart’s predominant quality is *dryness*, as it is in action continually; that of the brain is *moistness*, which is needed for nerve conduction; and that of the liver is *heat*, as its main function is metabolism.

Any measures taken to oppose or soften the effects of ageing have to acknowledge this, both by restoring the qualities of heat and moisture, and by avoiding activities that diminish them. For example:

- The elderly should avoid too much exposure to the sun: this reduces body *moisture quality*, so affecting brain activity.
- Eating heating foods should be encouraged: as this supports the *heat quality* of the liver.
- Fluid build-up in the body reduces the heart’s *dryness quality*, so should be treated effectively.

Tibb and the cycle of qualities

A person’s temperament is fixed for life. However, their quality composition drifts as time passes from infancy to old age. These are shown in the table below:

Stage of Life	Age	Dominant qualities
Infancy	Up to 2 years old	Cold & Moist, to Moist & Hot
Babyhood	Up to 6 years old	Moist & Hot
Childhood	Up to 14 years old	Moist & Hot to Hot & Moist
Teenager / Adolescent	13 to 19 years old	Hot & Moist to Hot & Dry
Youth	20 to 30 years old	Hot & Dry
Adulthood	30 to 55 years old	Hot & Dry to Dry & Hot
Late adulthood	55 to 75 years old	Dry & Hot to Cold & Dry
Senescence / Old age	From 70 years on	Cold & Dry

Tibb considers this has implications regarding the onset of specific disorders. When young we are more prone to phlegm or moistness related disorders like diarrhoea, colds and flu. However, as we age we are more susceptible to cold and dry disorders like osteoporosis, arthritis and some cancers.

What can be done?

Tibb accepts that there is no plausible or confirmed way of reversing the ageing process: no “Fountain of

Eternal Youth”, “Elixir of Life”, exotic herbal formula or magical supplement. Even so, there is quite a lot that we can do to slow down the process. Tibb itself adopts a four-stage approach. The first is to recognise the benefits that adopting Tibb’s key Lifestyle Factors like a better diet and more exercise. The second stage is actively encouraging Physis, our ‘doctor

A varied, nutritious diet, keeping weight under control, regular physical exercise, good sleep quality and a positive outlook on life are important components for maintaining a desirable quality of life.

within’, our innate powers of self-healing. The third stage is abandoning or minimising personal bad habits. The final stage is practicing certain hands-on and other health supporting practices.

Boosting inner healing

Physis is a cardinal concept in Tibb. It is our body's constant, built-in ability to heal itself, and our principal defence against cancer, infection and a toxic environment. As with many processes, it tends to get weaker and slower with age, and so it needs all the support it can get. It can be fostered by simple "hands-on" therapies, such as massage, hydrotherapy and aromatherapy, and by the occasional period of fasting. Improving the Lifestyle Factors (as we will see) also helps.

The food we eat

A faulty lifestyle often precedes the onset and progress of many chronic ailments of ageing. Especially type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart disease and Alzheimer's. The food and drink we consume are probably the most important part of this.

Tibb suggests some simple dietary changes: ^(Ref.1)

- Selecting food which is hot and moist in quality, not dry, bulky or difficult to chew, swallow and digest. This helps to reverse the age-related increase in the cold and dry qualities.
- Getting into the habit of eating regularly, in small portions, as this ensures a steady flow of energy. Breakfast is a particularly important meal.
- Drinking more water and other fluids. This is essential to avoid dehydration, which speeds up the ageing process.
- Reducing refined and processed foods in the diet in favour of quality fresh fruits and veggies. Also dairy products, as they can slowly lead to digestive intolerance.

Physical exercise delays ageing

Tibb accepts that maintaining a healthy brain and a clear mind when getting older is getting regular exercise. Physical movement and rest are in fact one of the critical Lifestyle Factors. Regular mild to moderate physical exercise reduces the risks of falling victim to diabetes and arthritis. Recent research reveals that an inactive lifestyle is linked to dread diseases such as a heart attack, stroke or cancer in the later years. It can also help to reduce the loss of body muscle that invariably accompanies ageing. Exercise has to be realistic and at an appropriate degree of intensity, otherwise it might trigger other health problems.

Tibb suggests the exercise(s) selected should: ^(Ref.2)

- Be light to moderate in intensity and duration, rather than explosive or violent in practice.
- Be enjoyable, so more likely to be carried out regularly.
- Be known to support Physis, rather than the opposite.
- Be appropriate for the person's temperament.

Sleep and ageing

Good quality sleep, a welcome bonus with advancing years, should be encouraged by adopting a range of simple steps. Sleep is important because it lets Physis detox the body without interference. Contrary to popular opinion, the elderly need just as much sleep as younger people. Short afternoon catnaps can be a real boon for some, as they compensate for poor night sleep, improve alertness, and boost brain activity. And they do not interfere with normal sleep. Calming routines, such as a warm bath or shower and light reading before bedtime also help.

Tibb suggests that sleep can be improved by: ^(Ref.3)

- Avoiding heavy meals or spicy food before bedtime.
- Ensuring that bed linen is clean, dry and preferably organic.
- Keeping the room at a temperature that suits the elderly person's temperament.
- Banning social media and electronic gadgetry from the bedroom.

The air we breathe

The elderly are at greater risk of disorders arising from air pollution. This is particularly relevant for those who travel long distances by car, for example on holiday journeys, or those who are regularly stuck in traffic. Airborne toxins are now thought to play a part in the onset of brain disorders like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

Tibb suggests improving air quality by: ^(Ref.4)

- Upgrading air filtration systems in cars and caravans.
- Wearing a mask when the surrounding air is dust or solvent laden.
- Exercising in clean natural air, in the open, in the early morning.
- Bringing more house plants into the home and work area.

Elimination and ageing

The body's ability to detox naturally slows down with age. The result is often troublesome constipation and fatigue. The body is also less able to detoxify conventional drugs, so their effects persist longer. To compensate for this an elderly person should select a more suitable diet, become more active physically, and keep hydrated.

Tibb suggests improving elimination of toxins and natural waste by: ^(Ref.5)

- Selecting a high-fibre, fruit- and veggie-rich eating plan.
- Avoiding highly processed foods and sugar-rich snacks.
- Drinking plenty of clean, fresh water throughout the day.
- Exercising regularly in fresh air.
- Check that any drugs being taken are at the correct dose for an elderly person.

Emotions and ageing

On the emotional health front, it is critically important for cherish family and social relationships as one ages. Without these, optimal wellness will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. The unfortunate trend towards social isolation should be recognised, and actively opposed. Activities such as volunteering and doing community work, enrolling in an adult education course, joining a book club or gym help enormously to avoid this. Dealing with any emotional turmoil such as anger, anxiety and depression, although easier said than done, will help the elderly enjoy life more. This may need intervention from a healthcare practitioner.

Tibb suggests improving emotional health by: ^(Ref.6)

- Increasing contact with family and friends. Connecting is essential for emotional well-being.
- Avoiding loneliness by joining social, special interest or faith-based groups.
- Avoiding conflict situations with family members, friends and especially strangers.
- Volunteering for community work.

Massage

The benefits of regular massage in the elderly include:

- It lowers chronic stress, which encourages disorders like high blood pressure
- It helps reduce chronic pain or discomfort
- It improves blood flow in general, so aiding toxin removal
- It encourages better supply of nutrition to previously deprived parts of our body

Tibb is a strong supporter of massage, especially when combined with steam bathing and the use of appropriate oils. Head massage with almond, olive and other hot and moist moisturising oils is advocated during cool seasons, and cold and moist coconut oil during hot times. Regular massage boosts Physis, so helping to ward off illnesses.

Massage generally improves overall physical and mental vitality and self-esteem. Massage helps us not only look good, but feel good.

Personal habits

Tibb strongly supports dumping certain personal habits that hasten the onset or aggravate existing age-related disorders. They include curtailing smoking and avoiding smoky venues, limiting caffeine and alcohol consumption, and getting adequate exposure to sunlight, bearing in mind the person's skin type. The use of certain artificial sweeteners should be questioned, as some are linked to weight gain, diabetes type 2, and inflammation.

Herbal remedies

Several herbal remedies have a place in the elderly person's medicine chest. Not only do they restore the ageing body's harmony, they are effective in many disorders which mushroom in the elderly, such as diabetes, joint pains, disturbed sleep, and problems with digestion and breathing. They can be taken to protect key organs such as the liver and heart, and to ginger up flagging sexual activity. Ginseng, turmeric, cinnamon and cloves fit into this category.

Summary

There is much more to ageing than just looking after the skin, as most advertising media imply. The ageing process also affects the inner workings of our body. Many disorders seek us out as we age, and they inevitably reduce our quality of life. Tibb considers that they are in many cases the inevitable outcome of a faulty lifestyle, damaging personal habits, and often compounded by diminishing power of inner healing, or Physis. On the positive side Tibb asserts that there is much we can do to stave off the damage that ageing does both inside and outside, so prolonging good health, physical and mental activity, and protecting our overall quality of life. Most of them are sound, common sense. We cannot prevent becoming old, but we can certainly delay becoming decrepit or senile. The last part of the journey of life may be along a one-way street, but it need not be all downhill. As Sophocles, a wise old Greek philosopher noted: "no one loves life as those who are growing old".

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