

A Chinese Prescription for Health and Longevity

Shoshanna Katzman, M.S., C.A.



The search for the fountain of youth has continued throughout the ages. It would be great if there existed a pill derived from natural sources to insure a long and healthy life, but no such magical pill exists. In the meantime, the best solution is to take impeccable care of ourselves. There really is no other way around it.

Taking excellent care of ourselves requires a multitude of lifestyle decisions including, but not limited to, nutrition, exercise, stress, sex, emotions, and rest. So much to learn, so much to do, so many decisions to make in such a short time. Just knowing where to begin on this self-care quest can present a dilemma, not to mention the challenge of making the right health choices on a continuing basis once you actually decide what they are.

Seeking guidance from qualified health professionals, reading self-help books, learning from the experience of family and friends, and personal trial and error are all ways to proceed with a 'personal health quest'. A good place to start is with Chinese medicine texts which are a storehouse of ancient knowledge describing how to live a long, fruitful, and healthy life. Learning about Chinese medicine creates a greater realization and understanding of how your thinking & eating habits, along with your actions, affect the quality and length of life.

Chinese texts emphasize the existence of three aspects referred to as the "Three Treasures" which are the basis for Chinese healing methods practiced to promote health and longevity. Chinese Medicine espouses that the degree to which the Three Treasures are protected directly relates to one's degree of health. A lifestyle which promotes cultivation and protection of the Three Treasures provides a greater opportunity for a long, healthful life.

Chinese texts inform us that before birth the Three Treasures are plentiful and untainted. What occurs after birth determines the extent to which the Three Treasures are cultivated and preserved, or squandered and dissipated. Chinese texts place great emphasis on lifestyle practices which have positive effects on the Three Treasures, by bringing them closer to their original state of abundance. These practices include Tai Chi & Qi Kung exercises, Chinese herbs and nutritious foods, proper

sleep, a balanced lifestyle along with acupuncture and massage treatments. This is believed to be the key to prevent disease and degeneration, retard the aging process, and prolong life.

Essence (*Jing*) is the first of the Three Treasures and forms our genetic make up. It is the basis of all tissues in the body, and determines the strength of our immune system. Essence governs our growth and development, sexual maturation and function, along with conception and pregnancy. It receives its nourishment from food and water. It is most easily depleted through chronic stress, malnutrition, and illness - all the more reason to eat nutritious foods and lead a balanced lifestyle.

Chinese texts teach that a set amount of Original Essence exists at birth and when it is used up, death occurs. It is believed that any unused energy at the end of the day is transformed into a new form of essence during sleep. This is formed to protect the Original Essence from being depleted too quickly. So, don't run yourself ragged day in and day out! You must save energy at the end of the day, get plenty of sleep, and minimize stress to preserve and protect your Original Essence.






Energy (*Chi*) is the second of the Three Treasures. It refers to the life force which runs throughout every cell and tissue and motivates all vital functions and transformations within the human body. Food, water, herbs, and air are digested and eventually transformed into energy to provide the source of Vital Energy. As is the case with Essence, life is only possible when Energy exists; without it death occurs. Eating nutritious foods in proper amounts, getting enough rest, using tonifying herbs, indulging in moderate sex, expressing your emotions, and cultivating the breath through gentle exercise are ways to protect and maximize the flow of Vital Energy.

Spirit (*Shen*) is the third of the Three Treasures. It is the vital life force seen in the aliveness of one's expression, spark in the eyes, luster of complexion, and presence of mind. Chinese philosophy maintains that a calm, peaceful, and centered mind promotes a harmonious and healthy life. It is suggested that one practice meditative exercises such as Tai Chi and Qi Kung to promote a clear and peaceful mind, and therefore, a healthier and happier life.

All of the Three Treasures feed each other on many levels - thus an abundance or deficiency of one causes the same in the other. An accumulation of Energy produces Essence which, in turn, creates a wholesome Spirit. The maintenance of balance, harmony, and protection of all Three Treasures of life is important for creating optimal health and longevity. The solution to protecting and cultivating these Three

Treasures lies within ourselves. Following sound principles of living provide a greater possibility for a life without degenerative disease; a life filled with vitality and longevity.

*THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF LIFESTYLE PRACTICES THAT CAN BE DONE
TO CULTIVATE AND PROTECT THE THREE TREASURES:*

-  *Ingest high quality food and liquid*
-  *Practice gentle energy enhancing exercises*
-  *Manage stress through meditation and breathing exercises*
-  *Create regularity within your lifestyle*
-  *Find balance in your life*
-  *Protect yourself from extreme temperatures, especially the cold*
-  *Avoid excessive sexual practices*
-  *Get enough rest and sleep*
-  *Allow your heart and spirit to be open and flexible*
-  *Find your purpose in life and go for it!*

*Shoshanna Katzman is author of *Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20 Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy*, Avery/Penguin Group USA, October, 2003 along with a companion DVD and video produced by Swing Pictures, LLC. She has been a Tai Chi and Qigong practitioner since 1974 and Director of the Red Bank Acupuncture and Wellness Center (healing4u.com) since 1988. Shoshanna was the first woman President of the National Qigong Association (nqa.org) and currently serves as an Editorial Adviser for *Body & Soul Magazine*. She is President of the New Jersey Acupuncture Examining Board, producer of annual women wellness conferences (caringwomen.com) and co-author of *Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness* Avon Books, 1997.*

