

## SELF HEALTH CARE – THE TRADITIONAL WAY

The World Health Organization defines Traditional Medicine (TM) as the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness. Traditional medicine covers a wide variety of therapies and practices which vary from country to country and from region to region.

Based on the WHO definition, self health care in TM generally includes the following approaches and activities:

1. Health promotion and prevention of illness
  - Healthy life style which comprises of - Diet, physical activity, healthy daily schedule, good conduct and good thoughts.
  - Procedures, techniques and exercises to promote health such as acupuncture, massage (**Chinese Tuina**, **Thai Nuad**, **Indian Abhyanga of Ayurveda**), and exercises (*qigong, tai-chi*).
2. Naturopathy and Yoga including breathing exercises.
3. Meditation for mental and spiritual wellbeing.
4. Ayurveda for holistic health and
5. Disease management with herbal and other traditional remedies.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of common traditional practices in self health care used for promoting health, preventing illness, and in disease management. In this regard, activities that can be carried out by the individual are generally included. The information provided is to give a bird's eye view on self health care and to enable the reader to obtain additional information on any area of interest. Before embarking on self health care, an appropriate expert may also be consulted for better understanding of each practice.

### Health promotion

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to improve and maintain their health. Community involvement and participation are essential to sustain health promoting activities.

The traditional systems of medicine such as *Ayurveda* of India and the Traditional Chinese Medicine, both originated more than five thousand years ago have spread generally to neighbouring countries as well as to different parts of the world. As they have been recorded and practiced since ancient times, they are given as examples in self health care together with other recognized traditional systems of medicine of the WHO Member States. Countries of the South-East Region also have their own practices of self health care and they are deployed by the people in their respective countries.

### Healthy life style with emphasis on prevention of disease and health promotion

Health is the dynamic integration between the environment, body, mind and spirit. Traditional systems of medicine lay great emphasis on preventing illness. Elaborate description is available on personal hygiene encompassing diet and regimen to follow such as daily routine, seasonal routine, good thoughts and behavioral and ethical principles that contribute to health promotion. Observance of certain rules regarding suppressible and non-suppressible urges also lead to positive health.

### Daily routine

The regime of right living is designed for maintaining holistic health for a long and healthy active life; providing relief from pain and disease allowing satisfactory enjoyment of life and attainment of self-fulfillment.

**Time to wake up:** It is advisable to wake up in brahma muhurata that is one and a half hour before sunrise. It is rightly said “well begun is half done”. This is the best time for prayer, meditation, activities for physical and mental fitness and in getting ready for the day.

**Drinking Water:** Drinking water early in the morning according to one’s capacity cleanses the body by enhancing the elimination of toxic wastes through the urine and stool.

**Bowels:** One should attend to nature’s calls. Elimination of urine and faeces cleanse the body and cheers up the mind. Force should be avoided to expel the faeces.

**Teeth and mouth care:** The tongue and mouth should be kept clean. Soft brushes, made out of twigs of acacia, Indian beech, prickly chaff, etc. may be used for cleaning the teeth. Toothpastes used should not be sweet in taste; rather the taste should be bitter or astringent. A metal or plastic tongue scraper or twigs of plants mentioned above can also be used to clean the tongue. Retaining medicated oils or lukewarm water with ghee in mouth with blown cheeks improves the resistance of buccal cavity, prevents/heals ulcers in mouth, cracks of lips and also helps in maintaining the glow and tone of facial skin. Chewing of neem twig, clove, cardamom pod and fennel act as mouth freshener.

**Eye care:** The face should be washed with soap and clean water to prevent eye infection. Wash eyes with popular traditional eye wash or sprinkle plain water on eyes seven to ten times in the morning with water in the mouth and cheeks blown.

**Betel leaf chewing:** Chewing of betel leaves with small pieces of areca nut and fragrant substances like cardamom and cloves refreshes the mouth and enhances digestion.

**Oil massage:** Massaging whole body with oil promotes and maintains health. Oils used may be any of these namely sesame oil, mustard oil, coconut oil or medicated oils. Oil massage ensures softness and unctuousness of skin, free movement of joints and muscles, improves peripheral circulation and promotes elimination of metabolic wastes. More details are dealt in massage topic.

**Oiling body apertures:** Application of oil in nose, ears, anus and naval area and regular head and foot massage with oil prevents and treats the illness of ENT (Ear, nose and throat), headache, neck, checks hair fall and graying of hair, maintains the strength and luster of hair, gives good sleep, and takes care of all feet problems. Mustard oil/coconut oil or medicated oils are used for this purpose.

**Exercise:** Regular exercise is essential for perfect health. It builds up stamina and resistance against disease, increases the blood circulation and efficiency of body organs, promotes appetite and digestion and prevents obesity.

**Bath:** Bathing removes sweat and other impurities from the skin, improves wellbeing, appetite, and span of life. In winters water used for bath should be lukewarm. Hot water should never be used for head bath and face wash. After bath, one should wear clean clothes. One should have regular shaving, hair cut, and clipping of nails.

**Diet:** Diet should be regulated taking into account the constitution of a person, habitat, season, age, disease, work profile etc. Diet should be balanced and the quantity should be according to one’s digestive capacity. Food takes care of physical, mental, social and spiritual health therefore it is important to know what to eat, when to eat, how to eat and how much to eat and also to know which are healthy and unhealthy foods. Details of all this is dealt in the topic essential dietary practices and do’s and don’ts according to season are dealt in the topic seasonal guidelines.

**Daily work profile:** everyday work should be handled in such a way that it does not become a cause of continuous stress. Few tips are –

- Avoid hurry, worry and hurry in daily routine
- Don't be a person of extremes rather be moderate in everything
- Do work and time management and then proceed
- Prioritise your work and then proceed

**Marital life:** One should avoid sexual intercourse during menses, pregnancy, within one and half months after delivery and during sickness and disease. A life span of hundred years is divided into four with each of twenty five years. First twenty five years of life are for gaining knowledge and to remain away from sex. Next twenty five years are for productivity, getting married and having a family. Next twenty five years are to loosen up the sense of attachment and get set for detachment and last twenty five years are for renunciation. Married life is the most difficult phase of human life because it is full of responsibilities. Human life is given to perform certain duties and these duties should be performed with truth and wisdom but without attachment and expectations. Priorities of duties are self, personal family, extended family, society, country and the whole universe. If we perform our duties like this then we remain happy and also spread happiness and married life becomes a boon.

**Night sleep:** Duration of sleep for an adult is six to eight hours. On an average it is better to sleep in between 9.00 to 10.00 pm. "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise" is an age old phrase. By doing so one remains close to nature, light and active.

**Seasonal regimens**

Seasons are classified according to the movement of the sun. These are: spring, summer, monsoon, autumn, early winter and late winter. They are based on the astronomical division of the twelve months into six seasons. Change of season effects the physical strength, mental strength and the digestive strength. All these three strengths are very less in summers and rainy season, they are moderate in spring and autumn and they are maximum in early and late winters. Seasonal changes bring about illnesses and they may be prevented by adopting certain dietary and activities regimen based on the season.

**Seasonal Guidelines**

Season	Diet regimen	Activities regimen	Bio-cleansing regimen
Spring (Mar.-Apr.)	Take, light , dry, bitter, hot & astringent foods honey, wheat, barley and avoid or reduce heavy, oily foods and sweet, sour tastes	Moderate exercise, oil and powder massage, fomentations, steam, use of lukewarm water for bath and drinking Avoid day sleeping.	Therapeutic emesis
Summer (May-Jun.)	Take sweet, cold, unctuous, light, liquid food items, seasonal fruits,	Minimize exercise and sexual activities. Day sleeping in cool environment is	-

	milk, ghee, rice, barley, sweets, butter milk, coconut water, cold drinks like those made of sandalwood, rose, etc. Avoid hot, sour, spicy, salty, pungent foods and over eating	indicated. Application of cooling agents like sandalwood rose etc on skin and face.	
Monsoon (Jul.-Aug.)	Food should be hot sour, salty, light, unctuous and easily digestible, soups,	Powder massage and application of herbal pastes with fragrance on skin. Avoid excess exercise and sexual intercourse, day sleeping, sleeping in dew and on the ground, stagnant water in surrounding areas, damp areas and excess exposure to strong sun rays.	Therapeutic enemas/Rectal administration of medicaments.
Autumn (Sept.-Oct.)	Take sweet, bitter, light & cold food. Avoid curd/yogurt sour, salty pungent and heavy foods	To sit in moon light in the first quarter of the night. Avoid day sleeping	Therapeutic purgation
Early winter (Nov.-Dec.)	Intake of heavy, unctuous, sweet, sour, salty, hot food items, soups, honey, milk and milk products, Avoid light, dry & cold food, fasting or skipping meals	Oil Massage, steam, oiling of head, sun bath, exercise, warmth in clothes and home. Avoid day sleeping	-
Late Winter (Jan.-Feb.)	Sweet, sour, salty, unctuous, heavy and hot foods, soups, milk, rice, honey, ginger are indicated. Avoid excess pungent, bitter, astringent tastes, light, dry and cold foods	Use of woolen blankets and other measures for protection against cold such as warm clothing & warm homes. Massage, steam, exercise are indicated. Morning walk in dew should be avoided or done with precaution. Avoid day sleeping.	-

#### Some preventive regimens

Observation of certain prescriptions and prohibitions ensure physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. They are as follows –

## 1. Non-Suppressible urges

There are thirteen natural urges suppression of which may lead to illnesses as given below:

1. Suppression of urine may lead to difficulty in passing urine, urinary stone, atony of bladder and inflammation of urinary tract.
2. Suppression of stool may lead to pain in abdomen, indigestion, gas(flatus) in abdomen, headache.
3. Suppression of flatus may lead to pain in abdomen, indigestion, heart diseases, constipation or diarrhea.
4. Suppression of semen may produce stones (spermoliths), and pain in testis.
5. Suppression of vomiting may produce different types of illnesses like urticaria, giddiness, anaemia, hyperacidity, and fever.
6. Suppression of sneezing may produce rhinitis and chronic cold, headache, sinusitis and diseases of respiratory system.
7. Suppression of eructation may lead to hiccup, pain in chest, cough and loss of appetite.
8. Suppression of yawning may lead to diseases of the eyes, throat, ear and nose.
9. Suppression of hunger may lead to nutritional disorders, discoloration, body ache and debility.
10. Suppression of thirst may lead to dryness of mouth and throat, fatigue, deafness and pain
11. Suppression of tears may lead to mental disorders, pain in chest, giddiness and digestive disorders.
12. Suppression of respiration may cause suffocation, respiratory disorders, heart disease and even death.
13. Suppression of sleep may cause insomnia, mental disorders, digestive disorders and diseases of sense organs.

## 2. Suppressible urges –

There are three types of Suppressible urges expression of which create problems and they are concerned with mind, body and speech.

**Suppressible urges of mind are** - Greed, grief, fear, anger, pride, shamelessness, jealousy, attachment, desires, hatred etc.

**Suppressible urges concerned with speech are** - Telling lies, rude talk, talking bad about others and irrelevant and incoherent talking etc.

**Suppressible urges of body are** - Hitting others with body parts/instruments, sex with other's women, stealing etc.

One should remain away from all the above mentioned suppressible urges and they all should be under self control.

### **3. Good conduct/Ethical regimen**

There are various codes of conduct for maintenance of better mental health. A healthy mind is as important as a healthy body. Ayurveda deals with this as *aachar rasayana* meaning good conduct and tells us ways how to achieve it. This includes the following characteristics –

Truthfulness, control of anger, avoid alcohol and similar drinks, do not hurt others, maintain cool, speak with others softly, sweetly and with smiling face, cleanliness, respect to teachers and elders, love all, take care of others feelings, giving something that others need, do not criticize others, remain away from narrow mindedness, pride, harsh attitude and be close to merciful attitude, early to bed and early to rise, awareness regarding region, time and quantity. Belief in some power controlling the universe, we may give the name as God. Take out time for thanks to this power, prayer/spirituality, chanting, charity, helping elders/others, studying books concerned with spirituality to know how to make this human life meaningful and develop self control. Always act in a courteous and polite manner as happiness is achieved by giving and not by taking. Avoid bad company and make efforts to stay with good company.

These are the principles of right conduct according to Ayurveda and are applicable to all. By following this ethical regimen we develop power to suppress the urges mentioned in the point of suppressible urges and live the life with good conduct and good and positive thoughts.

### **4. Social hygiene**

Humans are social beings and so one has to work in the society in a manner which is conducive to better hygiene and sanitation of the community. This can only be achieved by individual's efforts as well as his/her cooperation with the concerned authorities (1) the house refuse should not be thrown at random. It should be consigned to its proper place. (2) Water drains should not be blocked. (3) Latrines and urinals should be kept properly cleaned. (4) Water sources should not be contaminated.

### **5. Bio-cleansing regime**

A traditional bio-cleansing regimen called *Panchakarma* comprising of five procedures that facilitates better bioavailability of medicines, helps to bring about homeostasis of body humors, eliminates disease-causing complexes from the body, checks the recurrence and progression of disease and helps in rejuvenation. The five fold measures included in this therapy are: therapeutic emesis, therapeutic purgation, therapeutic decoction enema, therapeutic oil enema, and nasal administration of medicaments.

*Panchakarma* procedures are preceded by therapeutic oleation and sudation applications to make the body systems conducive to elimination of bio-toxins and cleansing of channels such as sweat glands, urinary tract, and intestines. This is effective in managing auto-immune, neurological, psychiatric and musculo-skeletal diseases of chronic and metabolic origin.

### **6. Rejuvenation**

Traditional herbs for rejuvenation generally promote immunity of the body. They include goose berry (*Emblica officinalis*), ink nut (*Terminalia chebula*), moon seed (*Tinospora cordifolia*), winter cherry (*Withania somnifera*), long pepper (*Piper longum*), etc. Nutritious foods such as milk, ghee, nuts, seeds, wheat, oats and brown rice promote long and healthy life; maintain mental health and resistance against disease. The observance of dietetics and hygiene rules is essential for longevity in rejuvenation. *Aachar rasayana* (good conduct) mentioned in ethical regimen is a must for rejuvenation.

There are specific rejuvenation practices/herbs for different age groups, which help in restoring the loss of specific bio-values of respective ages. Best results of Rejuvenative herbs or techniques are obtained before the loss has happened or during that particular age span. Few examples are described below:

Age in years	Loss of	Desirable Rejuvenative herb
1 – 10	Childhood	Vaca (Acorus calamus)
11 – 20	Growth	Bala (Sida cordifolia)
21 – 30	Skin luster	Amalki (Emblica officinalis)
31 – 40	Intellect	Shankhpushpi (Convolvulus pluricaulis)
41 – 50	Skin tone	Jyotishmati (Celastrus panniculatus)
51 – 60	Vision	Jyotishmati Celastrus panniculatus)
61 – 70	Sexual power	Ashwagandha (Withania somnifra)
71 – 80	Vigour & Vitality	From 71-100 years of age
81 – 90	Mental strength,	rejuvenative herbs may not
91 – 100	Sensory and motor Strength, locomotion	be effective.

## 7. Essential dietary practices

The traditional systems of medicine offer a comprehensive approach for long and healthy life. The basic principles are to prevent and treat illnesses through proper dietary, seasonal regimen and natural remedies. They explain the properties of food and medicines in terms of their effects on the body. It is important to keep in mind the importance of food during traditional treatment. Therefore, careful planning of food is needed for each individual both in healthy and diseased conditions.

In traditional medicine, there is no separation between food and medicine; the underlying reason is that the absence of nutritive food or diet causes disease in the body. This can only be managed with appropriate food, which acts as medicine to heal the body of its ailment.

There are many disadvantages if proper and regular eating habits are not followed; such as, if the food is taken in excess, and before or after the normal time and interval, then it may lead to indigestion, dyspepsia and anorexia. Similarly, if food is taken less than the required quantity, it may cause disorders due to under nutrition like nutritional anaemia, weight loss, and sluggishness of mental activities, loss of energy as well as disorders like hyperacidity, gastritis, gastric and duodenal ulcers.

Apart from other factors, “nutritional disorders” are common health problem in the Region. Nearly 80% of the children below the age of 5 years are undernourished. 50% of all pregnant and lactating women have nutritional anaemia in developing countries. Malnutrition is the single largest contributor to the high rate of infant and child mortality and morbidity. To combat this situation, the traditional systems of medicine have a role to play as these systems are deeply rooted in the culture and tradition.

### **Healthy food**

1. Freshly cooked, unctuous, compatible, clean, light and warm food.
2. Seasonal food should be preferred.
3. Meals containing all six tastes namely, sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent
4. Food items recommended in various classes of food like – cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits, dry fruits, milk and milk products, beverages, non vegetarian foods, condiments and spices
5. Recommended foods according to constitution, age, work profile and disease.

### **Unhealthy food**

1. Containing foreign bodies like soil particles, grass, bones, hair, nails, etc.
2. Preserved food, tinned and canned foods
3. Baked food (half baked/over-cooked food) and re-warmed, stale food

4. Excess of refined cereals
5. Food having more of low calories (millets).
6. Excessively hot spicy and salty food.
7. Diseased, infected, unripe or unseasonal fruits or vegetables.
8. Food containing synthetic agents.
9. Consumption of incompatible food items.
10. Focussing only on one or two tastes.
11. Daily consumption of curd
12. Regular use of unhealthy food causes diseases.

Eating a healthy diet implies that quality; quantity and time must be appropriate which vary with age, constitution, digestive power, season, disease and also from person to person. One has to consume the diet, which is suitable in all aspects to stay healthy. In addition, wrong cooking procedures, irregular timing, and consuming imbalanced and non-congenial food and not following the prescribed rules for preparing, preserving and eating food may also cause imbalance of health.

#### Diet and mind

Diet plays an important role in keeping our mind healthy. The effect of food on mind may be seen in the following three types of diet.

1. Vegetarian, not too oily/fried, not too spicy food items are congenial to the body.
2. Too spicy, hot, sour, salty food excites the mind.
3. Too oily, heavy food leads to lethargic mind.

Intake of food must be in a balanced manner to keep both the mind and body healthy.

#### Rules for food consumption/food habits

##### **Do's**

- The food should be tasty, warm, unctuous, nutritious, fresh, easily digestible and good in appearance.
- Food should be suitable to one's constitution, mental and emotional temperament.
- One should eat in comfortable sitting position.
- Food should be eaten in pleasant surroundings with utensils and preparation of individual's choice.
- It is best to focus/concentrate on food while eating and eat with peaceful mind.
- Food should neither be very hot nor very cold.
- Liquid/water intake should be more frequent and in small amounts.
- Rich food should be taken in a limited quantity and sometimes.
- Heavy food should not be taken at night. The proper time for night meals is two to three hours before going to bed.
- Eat only when the last meal has been digested and you feel hungry.
- For holistic health one or two proper meals are sufficient. Remaining timings if hungry have any of these food items - fruits, dry fruits, salad, liquids, milk.
- Every meal should contain all six tastes namely sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent.
- Start with sweets/salad/water/fruits, then main course and end your food with chewing fennel, cardamom, clove, betel leaf etc.
- Always have variety in food
- Eat neither too fast nor too slow.
- After meals sit with straight spine for sometime then walk for some time and then lie down on your left side for some time so that the consumed food is digested properly.



### **Don'ts**

1. Food contrary to each other in action; e.g. fish and milk together, radish and milk together, honey and ghee in equal quantity.
2. Daily consumption of heavy foods.
3. Eating food in hurry, worry and with excess curries
4. Eating very slowly or very fast
5. Eating and performing any other activity like- reading, talking, watching television, computer, travelling or any other work.
6. Taking food in emotionally upset conditions like depression, anger, greed, hatred, etc.
7. Excessive use of any of 6 tastes namely sweet, salt, sour, pungent, bitter and astringent.
8. Daily consumption of curd, too spicy, salty and pungent foods.
9. Over eating, skipping meals or eating very less, munching again and again, eating without hunger, eating incompatible foods
10. Sleeping immediately after meals.
11. Playing games, travelling, physical work, talking or laughing loudly immediately after meals.

### Incompatible diet

The food with incompatible or contradictory qualities has poisonoustoxic effect on the body that aggravates the three humors: ether and air (*Vata*), fire and water (*Pitta*) and water and earth (*Kapha*), which in turn leads to various disorders; viz: lump, fever, allergic dermatitis, eczema, abscess and other skin diseases. It also impedes strength, vigour, memory, immunity, etc. Some contradictory combinations are:

1. Fish or its soup along with milk.
2. Equal quantity of honey with ghee.
3. Milk or milk products with alcoholic beverages.
4. Milk with sour or salty foods
5. Radish consumed with milk
6. Lotus stem with honey
7. Milk or curd with sour or citrus fruits
8. Cooked or warm honey
9. Fruits with potatoes or other starchy foods, etc.

### Outcome of proper observance

The principles laid down in the daily routine, seasonal routine, dietary practices and behavioral and ethical principles are useful in preventing illnesses as well as for promoting health. Proper observance of these principles leads to harmony within body mind and soul, giving physical, mental, social and spiritual health thereby leading to complete wellness.

### Clinical nutrition: Specific diet for specific conditions

#### **Pregnancy and lactation**

- Milk and milk products, different types of gruels made from cereals and pulses, sweets.
- Green vegetables, cereals, fruits.
- Unpolished rice, green, horse and black gram, etc.

#### **Diet for children**

- Milk and milk products.
- Honey, sweet and little fatty food.
- Resin, almonds and other dry fruits
- Sweet jam made up of goose berry, white gourd, grapes, etc.

- Seasonal fruits
- Wholesome meals, which are nutritive and digestive by adding Bishops weed, cumin seeds, fenugreek, etc.

#### **Diet for the elderly**

- Diet aggravating energy of movement, dry foods, preserved, unwholesome foods should be avoided.
- Milk, ghee, etc. are advisable in moderate quantity.
- Easily digestible food, barley, red variety of rice, green gram, black gram should be taken.
- Fruits like goose berry, banana, citrus and other seasonal fruits.

### **Procedures/techniques and exercises to promote health**

#### **Acupressure**

Acupressure is an ancient healing art developed in Asia over five thousand years ago. Fingers are used to gradually press key healing points, which stimulate the body's natural self-curative abilities. Stimulation of acupressure points releases muscle tension, promote circulation of blood, and enhance the body's life force energy to aid healing. Acupressure therapy is used to relieve pain, fortify the sexual reproductive system, detoxify the body for greater health, and tone facial and back muscles.

#### **Massage (traditional Chinese *tuina*, *Nuad Thai* and Indian *Abhyanga* of Ayurveda)**

***Tuina***: It is a popular manual technique commonly used to promote health based on theory, diagnostic procedures and treatment of clinical conditions associated with pain as in soft tissue injury, bone fracture, joint dislocation and other musculoskeletal conditions. It consists of pushing (*Tui*) and grasping (*Na*) of soft tissue for pain relief. In bone fractures and joint dislocations, *Tuina* is often used together with modern medical care in management of these conditions.

***Nuad Thai***: It is therapeutic Thai massage that has a tradition of over six hundred years. It consists of examination, diagnosis and treatment with the intention to prevent disease and promote health. It uses pressure, circular pressure, squeezing, touching, bending, stretching, application of hot compresses, steam baths, traditional medicine or other procedures of the art of Thai massage, all of which are based on the principles of Thai traditional medicine. It is administered to promote health by relaxing muscle tension. It is also used to relieve tension headache, muscle spasm, paralysis and paresis as in Parkinson's disease.

**Indian *Abhyanga***: *Abhyanga* is a massage technique of Ayurveda. It is used for health promotion and treatment. Lukewarm, fragrant, medicated oil is used for massage and oil selection is based upon season, disease, constitution of person. Oils having cooling effect are used for massage in summers and oils having hot effect are used for massage in winters. Massage is done right from head to toe with different steps for different parts of the body Effects of *abhyanga* are –

- Daily oil massage helps in delaying aging process
- Relaxes body and mind
- Improves eye sight
- Improves physical strength, mental strength and strength of digestive fire.
- Promotes longevity of life
- Improves the texture of skin and makes it soft
- Improves immunity
- Helps in good sleep
- Detoxifies the body

## **Exercise (ancient Chinese *Tai chi* and *Qigong*)**

***Tai chi*** is a practice for health improvement involving slow, graceful exercises that combine movement, meditation and deep breathing to improve the flow of *chi* which is thought to prevent illness and improve well-being. *Tai chi*, originated in China as a martial art, is practiced to reduce stress, and to help elderly adults improve posture, balance, muscle tone, flexibility and strength and promote overall well-being.

***Qigong*** is a health care system that integrates physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intention. It is a combination of *qi* and *gong*; *qi* means life force or vital-energy that flows through all things in the universe; and *gong* means cultivating energy. *Qigong* is practiced for health maintenance, healing and increasing vitality.

## **Naturopathic medicine**

### **Naturopathy**

Naturopathy is a science of healthy living that originated in Europe around 19<sup>th</sup> century. It teaches how one should live, what one should eat and how our daily routine should be. Nature cure not only helps us in attaining freedom from disease but also helps in acquiring positive and vigorous health.

Its main objective is to change the living habits of people and to teach them the healthy lifestyle. Different modalities of Naturopathy are helpful in fulfilling this objective.

The human body has remarkable recuperative power. It is composed of five great elements – ether, air, fire water and earth. Imbalance of these elements creates diseases. Treatment of diseases by these elements is known as Nature Cure. The general treatment modalities and diagnostic methods employed in Naturopathy are as follows:

### **Diet therapy**

According to this therapy, the food must be taken in natural or maximum natural form only. Fresh seasonal fruits, fresh green leafy vegetables and sprouts are excellent for this purpose.

These diets are broadly classified into three types which are as follows:

- **Eliminative diet**: Liquids – lemon, citric juices, tender coconut water, vegetable soups, butter milk, wheat grass juice, etc.
- **Soothing diet**: Fruits, salads, boiled/steamed vegetables, sprouts, vegetable chutney, etc.
- **Constructive diet**: Wholesome flour, unpolished rice, little pulses, sprouts, curd, etc.

Being alkaline, these diets help in improving health, purifying the body and rendering it immune to disease. To this end, a proper combination of food is necessary. Our diet should consist of about 20% acidic and 80% alkaline food for preserving health. A balanced food is a must for any individual seeking good health. Food is regarded as medicine in Naturopathy.

### **Fasting therapy**

Fasting is an important modality in the natural methods of health preservation. For fasting, mental preparedness is an essential precondition. Thereafter, fasting for one or two days is good for any individual. Prolonged fasting should be done only under the supervision of competent Naturopath.

Fasting in Naturopathy intends to give rest to the digestive system. During this process, the vital energy which digests the food is wholly engaged in the eliminative process. This is the object of fasting too. Fasting is an excellent treatment for removing the disorders of mind and body. Fasting is advised in treating disorders such as indigestion, constipation, gas, digestive disorders, bronchial asthma, obesity, high blood pressure, gout, etc.

### Mud therapy

Mud therapy is simple and effective in giving coolness to the body. The mud used for this purpose should be clean and taken from 3 to 4 feet depth from the surface of the ground. There should be no contamination with stone pieces or chemicals, manure etc. in the mud.

Mud dilutes and absorbs the toxic substances of the body and ultimately eliminates them from it. Mud packs and mud baths are the main forms of this treatment. In different conditions such as constipation, headache due to tension, high blood pressure and skin diseases, etc. mud therapy is used. In headache and high blood pressure, mud pack is applied on the forehead. Apply mud pack over abdomen for getting rid of constipation.

### Hydrotherapy

Like mud, water is an ancient method of treatment. Taking bath properly with clean, fresh and cool water is an excellent form of hydrotherapy. Such bath opens up all pores of the skin, imparts lightness and freshness to the body, all systems and muscles of the body are activated and the blood circulation improves. The old tradition of taking bath in rivers, ponds or water falls on specific occasions is virtually a natural form of hydrotherapy. Hip bath, enema, hot and cold fomentation, hot foot bath, spinal bath, steam bath, immersion bath, hot and cold packs on abdomen, chest and other parts of the body are the recent developments of hydrotherapy. Hydrotherapy is used mainly for preserving health and curing different types of illnesses.

### Masso-therapy

Massage is also a modality of Naturopathy and quite essential for preserving health. It aims at improving the blood circulation and also strengthening bodily organs. In winter season, sun-bath after massaging the whole body is well known practice of preserving health and strength. It is beneficial to all. It bestows combined benefits of massage and sunrays therapy. In disease conditions, necessary therapeutic effects can be obtained through specific techniques of massage. Massage is a substitute of exercise for those who cannot do it. The effects of exercise can be derived from massage.

### Chromo-therapy

Seven colours of sun rays are believed to have different therapeutic effects. These colours are violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. For prevention and treatment of different illnesses, these colours are used. The simple method of Chromo-therapy is exposing the patient to sunlight which helps in the process of recovery from illness. Exposure to sunlight also helps in keeping a person healthy.

### Air therapy

Fresh air is very essential for good health. The advantage of air therapy can be achieved by means of air bath. In this process one should walk daily after removing the clothes or wearing light clothes at a lonely clean place where adequate fresh air is available. Yoga breathing exercise is also used therapeutically as a method of air therapy.

### Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is use of essential oils derived from herbal materials such as flowers, leaves, seeds, and other parts of the plant. It is used by inhalation, or through the skin in baths, compresses and massage to localized area or to the whole body to produce beneficial effects. It has been found to be helpful in promoting health and wellbeing as well as in reducing stress and anxiety.

## Yoga

Yoga is an ancient self health care practice that originated in India. Yoga, basically, is a combination of physical postures, breathing exercises and meditation to improve or develop one's inherent powers in a balanced manner. It is union of body and mind and not just a physical exercise.

The practice of yoga dealing with body postures, hand postures and breathing exercises practiced with faith, perseverance and insight rejuvenates the brain, heart, lungs, liver, pancreas,

kidney, bowels, nerves, muscles, tissues and glands of the body by ensuring oxygenated and balanced blood supply, kindles up the appetite, bestows control over seminal fluid, senses and mind and imparts increased vitality, vigor and longevity to the practitioner.

#### Body postures (Asanas)

These are special patterns of postures that stabilize the mind and body through static stretching. The aim is to establish or improve the general muscle tone. The basic principle governing the performance of body postures is psycho-neuro-physical and not only physical. Every body exercise should be performed effortlessly and maintained for a period of time comfortably. There should be no jerks and the performance of exercise should not lead to undue fatigue.

The body postures are classified as: (1) Meditative; (2) Cultural and (3) Relaxative.

1. Meditative body postures are sitting postures, which maintain the body in a steady and comfortable condition. By various arrangements of the legs and hands, different meditative body postures are performed. The characteristic feature of the Meditative posture is keeping the head, neck and trunk erect.
2. Cultural body postures involve static stretching which brings about proper tone of muscles. This contributes to the flexibility of the spine and renders the back and spinal muscles stronger. They also stimulate proper working of the vital organs in the thoracic and abdominal cavities. There are innumerable varieties of cultural body postures, which are performed in sitting, lying and standing position.
3. Relaxative body postures are few in numbers. They are performed in the lying position and are meant for giving rest to the body and mind.

Salutation to sun is a very useful and popular mode of yogic exercise. It consists of a series of 12 body postures which are performed early in the morning facing the rising sun. It energizes the entire neuro-glandular and neuro-muscular system of the body and its regular practice ensures a balanced supply of oxygenated blood and perfect harmony to all the systems of the body, thus invigorating the entire psychosomatic system of the human constitution.

When a person has less time just do micro exercises from head to toe for all muscles and joints of the body along with few times sun salutation. But yoga should be learnt properly from an authentic Yoga teacher.

#### Yogic breathing (Pranayama)

These practices bring control over the respiratory impulses, which form one of the channels of the flow of autonomic nerve impulses. Holding of the breath for a prolonged period of time comfortably is an essential technique of yogic respiration. However, in the initial practice, the breath holding phase is completely avoided and emphasis is put on the controlled inspiration and expiration with a time ratio of 1:2 between them. The expiratory phase is so controlled that the following inspiratory phase is not affected in its slow and controlled inspiration. The main purpose of this respiration is to gain control over the autonomic nervous system and through its influence, the mental function is also controlled and regulated. It is useful in higher yogic practices like meditation.

#### **Meditation for mental and spiritual wellbeing**

Continuous and un-interrupted flow of mind in the same direction wherever the mind is fixed is meditation. The basic principle of meditation is to develop internal awareness.

Meditation is a practice that involves mind and body. It originated in ancient times as a part of religious and spiritual practice. Meditation relaxes the mind and therefore can be beneficial in reducing mental stress. There are two types of meditation – mindfulness meditation (MM) and transcendental meditation (TM). MM is practiced in Buddhism and TM in Hinduism. A common practice in MM is to focus attention on a bodily function such as breathing – inhalation and exhalation – so that the mind is blocking other thoughts from entering into it. In TM, one focuses on a word, or phrase in the mind or a sound that one hears thereby achieving a similar result as

in MM. Meditation is practiced to increase calmness of the mind, to promote physical relaxation, to improve psychological balance, to cope with the stress of illness, or to improve overall health and well-being

This is the practice involving control of the mental functions which start from the initial withdrawal of the senses from external objects to the complete oblivion of the external environment. It is a process of absorption in which the individual tries to turn attention to experience. It is not always safer to start one's practice in meditation without preparing adequately through body postures and respiration exercise. Therefore it is important to go step wise and reach the ultimate bliss. Eight steps have been mentioned in Patanjali Yoga named as **Ashatanga Yoga** and they are –

Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahar, dharna, dhyana and Samadhi. This is the proper sequence of entering into Yoga and meditation class but it should first be learnt by an expert. By working on different body postures, breathing techniques, withdrawal of senses from external objects one develops control on body, breath and mind. By regular practice of meditation, one acquires the power to concentrate deeply resulting in manifold benefits such as increased physical energy, mental efficiency, creativity, calmness, memory, intellect, psychic power and intuitiveness.

### **Concluding tips for self health care – the traditional way**

In the traditional health care approach health is achieved by devoting time for mind and body. Thus two to three hours every day should be for self health care then only holistic health can be achieved otherwise we remain dependent upon medicines.

Schedule of two to three hours per day should be something like this –

Daily walk – 45 minutes

Daily workout – One hour - Yoga/exercise/aerobics/gym

Daily feel your inner silence – 20 minutes

Daily pray according to your belief – 15 minutes morning and evening

Take care of the followings –

Diet

Sleep

Sexual behavior

Daily schedule

Seasonal regime

Suppressible and non suppressible urges

Conduct

Thoughts

Regular use of don'ts becomes causative factor in production of diseases. Discipline in all above should be maintained at least five days a week and everyday love yourself, accept yourself, respect yourself and forgive yourself. All these practices help in activating one's own healing power.

### **Disease management with medications including herbal and other traditional remedies**

Health of an individual is a dynamic integration of environment, body, mind and spirit. Taking this fact into consideration, traditional systems of medicine lay great emphasis on preservation and promotion of health and preventing the occurrence of disease. Besides, it advocates employing holistic approach to understand all aspects of human life including diagnosis and management of diseases.

The therapeutic approaches advocated in traditional medicine comprise spiritual measures, pharmacological therapies and non-pharmacological psychotherapies. The treatment plan is worked out on the basis of underlying morbidity keeping in mind the strength of the disease and the tolerability of the patient. Four-pronged treatment plan consisting of avoidance of causative and precipitating factors of disease, bio-purification, use of palliative remedies and health-promoting regimen are the hallmarks of traditional therapeutics. Specific diet and lifestyle guidelines are always prescribed along with the drugs and therapies. Methods of holistic treatment are advocated.

Member countries of the South-East Asia Region have national formularies of their traditional systems of medicine which contain herbal and traditional remedies for specific ailments that have been used by successive generations in the past. They have been handed down from generation to generation and have been known and accepted to be effective and safe. Some of the recent publications in the Region are: (1) *Guidelines for the use of herbal medicines in family health care* by the Ministry of Health of Indonesia (2010); (2) *Traditional herbal remedies for primary health care* by WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (2011); and (3) *Monographs on the use of traditional medicine in primary health care* by the National Institute of Traditional Medicine, Bhutan (2012).

The above publications contain treatment of common ailments with herbal remedies. They include: acidity and gastritis, common cold, conjunctivitis, constipation, cough, diarrhoea, earache, eczema, eye discharge, fever, fungal infection of the skin, headache, indigestion, jaundice, leucorrhoea, lice infestation, malaise, painful menstruation, parasitic infestation, piles, scabies, sexual dysfunction, sprain, toothache, urinary disorder, vomiting and wound.