

# HEALTH WISDOM

## for Women

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### The Three Treasures: A Chinese Prescription for Health & Longevity

By Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.A.

*I see an acupuncturist regularly named Fern Tsao. She is ageless and has the energy of a 10-year-old! One of her secrets is Qigong (pronounced chi kung), the ancient Chinese art of maintaining vital energy. I've wanted to introduce my readers to this subject—a combination of exercise and meditation—for some time, so when Shoshanna Katzman, author, acupuncturist, and Qigong practitioner with decades of experience, offered to write an overview for HWW, I jumped at the chance! These simple steps will help you preserve and even increase your energy during the upcoming holiday season—and will also help you keep everything in perspective. —C.N.*

What can we do to avoid sickness, debility, and senility in our lives? What can we do to help ourselves heal from diseases or afflictions already a part of our lives? What can we do to create a longer, healthier, enjoyable, and more productive life? I suggest we look toward the ancient wisdom of the Chinese people who have studied the phenomenon of longevity for over 5,000 years to find these answers. A vast body of Chinese medical knowledge has accrued from these efforts, providing a viable alternative to unhealthy, destructive life habits.

This Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) view of health emphasizes the influence of emotions, nature, electromagnetic forces, and energy on the human body and spirit. The system is built on the belief that energy flows throughout every living thing and health depends on how and where this energy is flowing. It greatly emphasizes the importance of prevention as a necessary first step toward the creation and maintenance of good health.

The ancient Chinese medical texts are filled with information about how to prevent disease and degeneration, combined with numerous guiding principles for how to create a long and healthful life. A basic tenet of these teachings holds that we are born with an abundant supply of "the three treasures," which are essence, energy, and spirit. These three treasures are believed to have a direct effect on the aging process. Through proper cultivation, preservation, and protection of these three treasures, we can create a greater chance for a long and healthful life.

A fundamental relationship exists between essence, energy, and spirit whereby an accumulation of one, in turn, creates abundance in the other. To

The first classic of Chinese medicine, the *Nei Jing*, states that treating disease after it arises is like beginning to dig a well after one has become thirsty or like forging spears after war has already broken out.

retard the aging process, it is therefore essential to maintain balance and harmony within not just one, but all of the treasures. Understanding how these three treasures work together to promote proper body function provides a compelling impetus for making healthier choices in one's life.

Essence, also known as *Jing*, forms the initial substance from which the body is created and determines genetic make-up and constitution. The quality of *Jing* determines longevity and resistance to degenerative disease. Strong *Jing* generates a long life free of degenerative disease. Weak *Jing* manifests in children as failure to thrive, and in adults as premature aging. Tooth decay, arthritis, hearing loss, lack of sexual drive, osteoporosis, and senility are all examples of the physical and mental deterioration that occurs with the diminishing of essence.

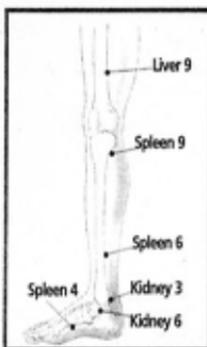
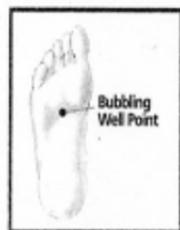
A finite amount of *Jing* exists within the body at birth. When it is ultimately used up, one dies. To ally this process, extra energy left over at the end of a day can be transformed during sleep and used to protect *Jing* from being consumed too quickly. Since we tend to have less excess energy as we age, our bodies can be depleted of *Jing* more quickly during this time. For this reason, it is best to conserve energy each day, go to bed and rise at a reasonable time, and avoid chronic stress throughout life, but especially in our later years. In addition, *Jing* receives its nourishment after birth from food and water. Consuming the purest and most potent foods and drinks available is thus essential to maintaining strong *Jing*.

Essence is mostly related to the kidneys, the primary organ that controls growth, maturation, aging, and natural death. This explains why strengthening, protecting, and cultivating kidney essence is a primary focus in Chinese longevity practices. The kidneys are considered to be the root of the body's energy and spark the energy of other vital organs. Maintaining proper amounts of kidney essence, therefore, has a profound effect on the energetics of the body.

Chinese tradition dictates that the kidneys are nourished by warmth, yet injured by cold. It is also believed that they are depleted from excess sexual activity. What constitutes excess in this case varies for each person, but in general no more than once or twice a week is the usual recommendation.

## Self-Help Hints to Protect Kidney Essence

- ☞ Sleep with socks on and refrain from walking bare-foot on cold floors to warm and protect the "Bubbling Well Point," the first point on the kidney meridian located on the sole of each foot.



- ☞ Wear a band around the lower back, or simply make certain it is covered, to protect the kidneys from the cold elements, especially in the winter months.
- ☞ Abstain from cold food and drinks, especially in the cold weather or right after vigorous exercise.
- ☞ Don't overdo sex. You can withhold your orgasm to preserve kidney Jing if desired during healing times.
- ☞ Do self-acupressure on the acupoint "Kidney 3" once daily for two minutes on each foot to strengthen not only the essence, but also the energy of the kidneys. Practice in a quiet place so you can concentrate on your breathing and achieve a relaxed, receptive state of mind and body. Breathe into your lower abdomen rather than your chest to further strengthen your kidney essence and energy. Use firm pressure applied gradually on the acupoint, with your thumb or middle finger.

## Free Flow of Energy Promotes Health

Energy, or Qi, refers to the life force flowing throughout every cell and tissue of the body. Qi motivates all vital functions and transformations, thus sustaining life. Ultimately, everything in Chinese medicine is based on the concept of Qi.



After birth, Qi comes from the digestion and transformation of the food, water, and herbs we ingest and the air we breathe. This means, it's not only important to eat right to have strong Qi, but to live in a well-ventilated environment and to get plenty of fresh air.

The ancient Chinese exercises of T'ai Chi and Qigong are excellent ways to cultivate Qi, thereby

supporting the welfare of the physical body. These slow, rhythmic, and meditative movements permit the entire body to relax, opening and restoring the proper flow of Qi within the energetic pathways (meridians) of the body. The free flow of energy that is created promotes blood flow, which transports nourishment to our vital organs, glands, and tissues.

T'ai Chi and Qigong movements are often synchronized with a slow, rhythmic, and deep breathing technique not only to increase lung capacity, but to cultivate and balance vital energy (Qi), calm the emotions and spirit (Shen), and nourish vital essence (Jing).

## Fluffing White Clouds

This exercise strengthens Qi, thus nourishing all three treasures.

To begin, stand with your feet parallel, shoulder-width apart, with your knees slightly bent. Your hands are resting open at your sides with your pinky fingers next to your legs and fingertips facing the earth. As you inhale, straighten your knees and lift your hands to shoulder height in front of you, with palms facing upward and elbows slightly bent.

As you exhale, turn your palms downward and bring your arms down, drawing your wrists back in toward your body and bending your knees again. The heel of your hand leads and fingertips follow. End with elbows slightly bent, palms face downward, your hands by your sides stretched out flat as if



gently patting white clouds. Turn your palms upward and continue from the beginning. Coordinate the movement of your hands with the bending and straightening of your legs.

The sensation of Qi during this exercise can be extraordinary. As your palms move upward, you may feel they hold a heavy weight. This is abundant Qi from the universe. By contrast, when your palms turn down and float back to your sides, it may feel as if there is a light, fluffy pillow beneath them. The power of these sensations increases with every repetition of the movement and your deep, rhythmical breath.

### Principles for Nourishing Spirit

Spirit, also known as Shen, represents all aspects of consciousness and mind, including awareness, cognition, thinking, feeling, will, and intent as reflected in our personality. The principles for nourishing spirit suggest an open, peaceful way of being combined with a balanced emotional life. The more you can flow within your own mind, the more things will flow around you and the brighter your *Shen* will be. Here are suggestions for creating a vibrant, shining *Shen*.

- ☞ Visualize yourself strong, yet flexible as bamboo—a Taoist symbol of longevity. Bamboo bends in the strongest winds. It survives without breaking, whereas rigid plants break and die. Remain firm in your inner goals, yet flexible in your choice of methods to achieve those goals.
- ☞ Create relationships that are good for you.
- ☞ Find what you truly love to do and go for it! Focus yourself toward this special goal and manifest it. Be one of those people living well into your nineties, imbued with a passion for life.
- ☞ Find time for fun, rest, and relaxation.
- ☞ Learn to express your emotions by allowing them to come out naturally as they arise. The emotions of anger, fear, sadness, grief, and worry need to be expressed to stay healthy. If you keep them pent up inside, they can have a negative effect on your vital organs. Begin this practice with care. Take your time. Be gentle with yourself and those around you as you honor and share your feelings. It is not the easiest route but it is certainly the healthiest.

A combination of flexibility, spontaneity, and freedom from judgment is the best way to achieve peace within yourself and your environment. The more your mind flows, the more your Shen will be pacified, your Jing cultivated, and your Qi will flow freely throughout your body.