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**Healthy Aging and Improved Longevity**

Leaving behind the bright years of youth and entering a quieter, more mature phase in life often prompts the question: How can I preserve my youth and extend my life? For answers to this question we might consult the teachings of Li Qing Yun.

According to the 1933 obituary for Li Qing Yun in Time Magazine, he lived from 1736 until 1933. While this improbably long life span has become the stuff of legend, for arguments' sake, let us acknowledge that this man managed to live to a ripe old age.

How did he live so long? Acupuncture and Oriental medicine provide guidance to understand what Li Qing Yun found essential to leading a long and healthy life. Let us examine the meaning behind his response when asked about his longevity: "Keep a quiet heart, sit like a tortoise, walk sprightly like a pigeon, and sleep like a dog."

**Nurture Your Emotional Health by Keeping a Quiet Heart**

What does it mean to "keep a quiet heart" from the perspective of acupuncture and Oriental medicine? The energy of the heart organ system is related to the element of fire. Fires can burn out of control, just as emotions can. Unchecked emotions and stress directly affect the heart. Common signs relating to disharmony of the heart include palpitations, insomnia and general anxiety. When the heart is in balance, joy is the natural state, and intimate relationships happen with ease. A person with a balanced, quiet heart can live a longer life than one whose heart is in a state of disharmony.

How can acupuncture and Oriental medicine help you achieve a "quiet heart" for improved health and longer life? The point Pericardium 6, known as Neiguan or Inner Pass, can provide relief from anxiety, sea sickness, nausea and light-headedness. You can use acupressure by pressing on this point to calm anxiety and reduce nausea. Turn your wrist palm-side up and starting at the wrist crease, find the two tendons in the center of your arm. Once you find them, place three fingers down starting from the wrist crease. At the other end of your three fingers lies the point. Press firmly with the thumb until you feel relief.

**Reduce Stress and Improve Mental Awareness by Sitting Like a Tortoise**

Meditation is of primary importance to health and longevity. Sitting and meditating as a daily practice is, effectively, sitting like a tortoise. A quiet, yet active practice, meditation requires mental stamina and strong will power and cultivates self-awareness.

By sitting for daily meditation practice, you can better let go of fears and accept the inevitable changes which occur internally as you age, and also in the outside world. The acceptance you gain through meditation includes the acceptance of your own mortality.

The kidney organ system is associated with will power and the emotion of fear. Through meditation you can cultivate the will power required to sit still, and also develop the personal strength of will necessary to confront the ceaseless thoughts and emotions of the mind. Because the kidney system relates to fear, one of the best ways to strengthen it is to successfully confront your fears and work through them.

As we grow older we see signs of declining kidney energy or deficient kidney Qi. In Oriental medicine, Qi refers to the life energy that flows through your body. Sometimes this life energy, or Qi, can become stuck or deficient in certain areas. Some of the more common signs of deficient kidney Qi include weak lower back muscles and knees, deafness, incontinence and forgetfulness--conditions that are often associated with aging.



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**Bladder Health and Incontinence**



Incontinence and urinary tract disorders commonly arise as one gets older, especially for women over 50. One reason the risk for incontinence increases as we age, is because the bladder lining starts losing elasticity which, in turn, reduces its ability to store urine. This can result in frequent and urgent bouts of urination. If this occurs at night it is called nocturia.

In some cases, coughing, sneezing or pressure on the abdomen may cause an involuntary voiding of urine, known as leakage. Those suffering from incontinence also endure a greater risk for repeated urinary tract infections (UTI).

A UTI occurs when bacteria enters the urinary system through the kidneys, urethra, ureters and/or the bladder. Although signs and symptoms vary according to the location of the bacteria, some common signs include the urgent, persistent urge to urinate, burning on urination, and cloudy urine.

### **Increase Vitality by Walking Spritely like a Pigeon**

What does it mean to "walk spritely like a pigeon"? The spirited gait of a pigeon gives the impression of vitality. The pigeon is very aware of its environment and ready to move or fly at a moment's notice. The spritely quality of the pigeon's mobility represents the energy of the liver organ system. The force a seed needs to sprout and break through the earth as it grows in the spring is a great analogy for the energy of the liver system as spring brings about new growth and new life.

From an acupuncture and Oriental medicine perspective, for greater vitality you need a healthy liver system. It is believed that any situation that constrains or frustrates a person will consequently injure the person's liver. In order for an aging person to remain healthy and creative, the body and mind must stay active. You must engage in new activities so that creativity and curiosity can flow freely and easily as you move through life.

### **Release Worries and Restore Energy by Sleeping like a Dog**

What does it mean to "sleep like a dog"? A dog falls asleep easily and sleeps very deeply, awaking fully restored. Regular, restorative sleep is a key to feeling young, healthy and vital. In order to sleep deeply and easily like a dog, the body and mind must willingly power down.

It can be very challenging in today's busy world to let go of your daily worries and thoughts in order to sink into deep, restorative sleep. Therapies are available to help address sleep issues you may be experiencing so you can get better rest.

Make a point of going to bed early and waking early to help regulate your sleep schedule. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine considers every hour of sleep you get before midnight to count double. So, try to go to bed as early as possible, and make sure the room where you sleep is quiet and serene to improve your chances of sleeping deeply.

If your sleep is peaceful and you wake feeling refreshed, this indicates your heart is balanced, your kidneys are strong and your liver energy flows freely. The more nights you have during which you sleep like a dog, the younger you will look and feel.

A healthy mind and body need not decline with age. Prevention of age-related cognitive and physical issues involves safeguarding the yin, yang, and jing (adrenals, hormone balance, and genetic endowments) throughout your life span by maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle, avoiding toxins, keeping harmony in your environment and relationships, and maintaining balanced activity and rest.

**Call today to learn how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help maintain your health and improve your vitality as you age!**

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These conditions not only signal a malfunction of the urinary tract system, but may lead to social isolation and/or loss of self esteem.

Fortunately, acupuncture and Oriental medicine can address bladder health and reduce the symptoms of incontinence. The July 2005 edition of Obstetrics and Gynecology detailed a study called "Acupuncture for overactive bladder: a randomized controlled trial." The study aimed to compare acupuncture treatments versus placebo acupuncture for an overactive bladder.

Out of the 85 women initially enrolled, 74 completed the four weekly sessions. The researchers concluded that women who received four weekly bladder-specific acupuncture treatments had significant improvements in bladder capacity, urinary urgency and frequency, and quality of life as compared with women who received the placebo acupuncture treatments.

To maintain bladder health, increase water consumption and avoid irritants such as coffee, orange juice and most soft drinks, which can stimulate the bladder. Kegel, or pelvic floor exercises, can tonify the muscles used in urination.

**If you or someone you know struggles with bladder health and incontinence call today!**