

Exploration of Winter Health based on the Theory of the Four Seasons of the Yellow Emperor's Neijing

Yue Feng¹, Yane Jia², Yuanshan Tang^{2,*}

¹Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, Xianyang 712046, Shaanxi, China

²Xi'an Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Xi'an 710021, Shaanxi, China

*Correspondence Author

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to explore the principles and methods of winter health preservation based on the theory of the four seasons of the Yellow Emperor's Neijing. The article first summarizes the basic theory of health preservation in the Yellow Emperor's Neijing, and emphasizes the importance of winter health preservation. Based on the principles of winter health preservation, including conforming to nature, nourishing yin and hiding yang, diet and maintenance, daily life regulation and moderate exercise, corresponding suggestions are put forward. Studies have found that following the changes of yin and yang in nature is the key to winter health preservation, and through reasonable diet, daily life and exercise, the body's yang energy can be protected and cultivated, and the cold resistance and immunity can be enhanced. The conclusion of the article emphasizes the importance of winter health preservation and the necessity of following the principles of the Yellow Emperor's Neijing, hoping to arouse people's attention to traditional health culture and guide people to return to nature and live according to the laws of nature. The research methods are mainly based on literature review and theoretical analysis, through the in-depth interpretation of the Yellow Emperor's Neijing and related Chinese medicine literature, combined with modern lifestyles, a set of winter health preservation methods suitable for contemporary people have been formulated. Studies have found that following the changes of yin and yang in nature is the key link of winter health preservation, and through reasonable eating, living and exercise, the body's yang energy can be protected and cultivated, and the cold resistance and immunity can be enhanced.*

Keywords: "The Yellow Emperor's Neijing", Four o'clock health, Winter Wellness.

1. Introduction

The Yellow Emperor's Neijing attributes the rotation of the four seasons to the ebb and flow of yin and yang. Human beings who grow up in nature are always affected by the laws of yin and yang. Spring, summer, autumn, winter, alternating four seasons, all things grow strong and old with the changes of heaven and earth, and yang energy opens and closes with the movement of the sun and the moon [1]. "Su Wen: The Theory of the Whole Form of Treasure Life" cloud: "Those who can respond to the four seasons are the parents of heaven and earth." The life process of birth, growth, strength and old age should conform to the changes of yin and yang in the four solar terms [2], the so-called health preservation, that is, to conform to the rhythm of nature, to follow the four seasons, suitable for cold and summer, cautious living, diet, and emotion, in harmony with the form and spirit. Based on the theory of the four seasons of the Yellow Emperor's Neijing, the principles and methods of winter health preservation are discussed [3].

2. Characteristics of Winter in the Four-hour Theory

Winter refers to the six solar terms that start at the beginning of winter and end at the beginning of spring, with a total of six solar terms: the beginning of winter, light snow, heavy snow, winter solstice, small cold, and big cold. Cold and dryness were the distinguishing climatic characteristics of this period, and the vitality of nature seemed to be frozen and everything went into a dormant state. As stated in the "Su Wen: The

Great Treatise on the Four Tempering Spirits" Winter in March, It is said to be closed" [4], which means that winter is called closed, the weather is cold, it is the season when vitality is lurking, all things are hidden, and the human body's five internal organs and yang energy are hidden, which means that winter is a critical period when both nature and the human body should converge and store energy.

3. Principles of Winter Health

3.1 Key Points of Winter Health Care under the Theory of the Yellow Emperor's Neijing

The core of winter health care lies in "nourishing", that is, protecting and cultivating yang energy in the body. The Yellow Emperor's Neijing mentions: "If you go to bed early and get up late, you must wait for the sun" [5], which means that people should adjust their work and rest time in winter, go to bed early to nourish yin, and get up late to protect yang. In addition, "making ambitions hidden" means maintaining emotional stability and restraint, and avoiding excessive mood swings that affect the body's yin and yang balance.

3.2 The Impact of Winter Climate on the Human Body

In winter, the physiological activities of the human body also change accordingly. The Yellow Emperor's Neijing mentions: "Water and ice are not disturbed by the sun" [6], which indicates that in winter, the body's yang energy should be protected and stored from the invasion of the cold. Therefore, people should adjust their lifestyle habits to adapt to changes in the natural world.

4. Winter Diet Recommendations

4.1 Diet Diet in Winter is an Important Part of Health Preservation.

According to the four-season health theory of the “Yellow Emperor’s Neijing”, winter is the season to hide essence, and it is suitable to replenish through dietary therapy. Winter is the season to hide essence, and it is appropriate to replenish it. In winter, it is suitable to eat warm vegetables and fruits, through the heat contained in the food to dissolve the cold in the body and resist the cold outside the body, and the common warm foods are: beef, mutton, dog meat, chicken, yam, pig blood, glutinous rice, leeks, longan meat, eggs, etc [7]. People with excessive yang energy in the body, dry mouth and tongue, flushed cheeks, and hot hands and feet should not blindly nourish. It is advisable to consume warm and nourishing products, and be cautious of cold and excessively dry foods to avoid damaging the yang or breeding internal dryness [8]. The common medicinal diets in winter are: Angelica ginger mutton soup, mutton kidney eucommia five-flavor soup, angelica oxtail soup, dry ginger porridge, ginger milk, ginger brown sugar soup, etc., all of which are warm and tonic products.

4.2 Analysis of the Sexual Taste of Different Foods

In the theory of traditional Chinese medicine, the sexual taste of food is an important basis for dietary therapy and health preservation. The following is an analysis of the sexual taste of several common winter foods, and talks about the benefits of winter eating in combination with the “Yellow Emperor’s Neijing”: Beef: warm in nature, sweet in taste, and returns to the spleen and stomach meridians. The warming effect of beef helps to strengthen the spleen and stomach, suitable for people with weak physique and lack of qi and blood, eating beef in winter can replenish yang qi and enhance physical strength; Mutton: warm in nature, sweet in taste, returning to the heart, spleen, and kidney meridians. The warming effect of mutton helps to warm and replenish the kidney yang, suitable for people with soreness in the waist and knees, cold hands and feet, and eating mutton in winter can warm and replenish the kidney yang and enhance the body’s ability to resist the cold; Dog meat: warm, salty, return to the spleen, stomach, kidney meridian, has the effect of warming and replenishing kidney yang, strengthening muscles and bones, dog meat can help enhance kidney yang in winter, strengthen muscles and bones; Chicken: warm, sweet, return to the spleen, stomach meridian, can warm and invigorate qi, replenish essence and fill the marrow, chicken is suitable for people with weak physique, lack of qi and blood, and helps to enhance physical fitness; Yam: Flat in nature, sweet in taste, and returns to the spleen, lungs, and kidney meridians. The peaceful nature of yam makes it an ideal food for nourishing and not getting hot, suitable for people of all physiques, and eating yam in winter can strengthen the spleen and kidneys, and enhance immunity; Pig blood: warm, salty, return to the heart, liver meridian, has the effect of nourishing blood and nourishing the heart, nourishing yin and moisturizing dryness, pig blood is rich in iron, suitable for people with anemia, helps to replenish blood and enhance heart function; Glutinous rice: warm in nature, sweet in taste, returning to the spleen and stomach meridians, can replenish the middle and invigorate the qi, strengthen the

spleen and nourish the stomach; Glutinous rice has a good warming effect, suitable for people with spleen and stomach deficiency, and helps to enhance the function of the spleen and stomach; Leek: warm in nature, pungent in taste, and returns to the liver and stomach meridians. The pungent and warm effect of leeks helps to dissipate cold in temperature, which is suitable for people with stomach cold pain and loss of appetite; Eating leeks in winter can warm the stomach and dispel cold and increase appetite; Longan meat: warm in nature, sweet in taste, return to the heart, spleen meridian. The warming and tonic effect of longan meat helps to nourish the heart and spleen, and is suitable for people with heart and spleen deficiency, insomnia and dreams, and eating longan meat in winter can nourish the heart and calm the nerves and improve sleep quality [9]; Eggs: flat nature, sweet taste, return to the heart, lungs, kidney meridians, with the effect of nourishing yin and moisturizing dryness, nourishing blood and calming the nerves, eggs are suitable for people of various physiques, helping to nourish yin and nourish blood, calm the nerves and calm the mind.

5. Winter Living Adjustment

Winter living should follow the principle of “go to bed early and get up late, and wait for daylight”. This means that we should get up after the sun rises to conform to the growth of yang energy in nature. Winter corresponds to the water in the five elements, the season should be winter, the five organs should be kidney, the five chemicals should be hidden, the five flavors should be salty, the five colors should be black, and the five tones should be feathers. You should go to bed early and get up late, wait until the sun shines before getting up, and do not disturb the yang energy; Doing things in vain, so that the mind is hidden deep inward, and it is quiet; Avoid the cold, seek warmth, and when the skin is vented, the yang energy is constantly damaged. This means that in modern life, it is recommended to go to sleep before 10 p.m. and wake up after 7 a.m. to ensure sufficient sleep to assist in the body’s recovery and repair [10]; “Make the ambition hidden”, that is, to maintain emotional stability and restraint, to avoid excessive emotional fluctuations affecting the body’s yin and yang balance, you can choose meditation, yoga, tai chi and other ways to communicate with family members moderately; “Go to the cold and warm up”, that is, choose warm food and environment to avoid the harm of cold to the body. At the same time, “non-leaking skin” means that it is necessary to pay attention to keeping warm and avoid excessive exposure of the skin to the cold, so as not to leak out yang energy. These measures are all aimed at “making the qi rush”, that is, maintaining stability and sufficiency of qi and blood.

6. Winter Sports Methods

Winter exercise should conform to the laws of nature, in line with the health viewpoint of “lying down early and getting up late must wait for daylight”, and the time for winter exercise should be after sunrise [11]. Gentle and moderate activities should be chosen, such as tai chi, baduanjin, walking, jogging, etc. [12]. These exercises can not only promote qi and blood circulation, but also improve the flexibility and coordination of the body, and enhance the heart and lung function. Traditional health exercises such as Tai Chi and Baduanjin combine breathing and movement to help regulate the body

and mind, achieving the effect of both internal and external cultivation. The best time for winter sports should be after sunrise, because after sunrise, the natural yang energy begins to grow, and at this time, exercise can conform to the changes of the natural yang energy, which helps the human body to grow yang energy and the circulation of qi and blood. Exercise should be regular, at least 3 to 5 times a week, and each exercise should be between 30 and 60 minutes long. Winter sports have significant benefits in strengthening the body's resistance to cold and improving immunity, and it lays the foundation for a vibrant spring. However, in order to maximize these benefits while avoiding possible risks, here are a few key things to keep in mind: First, keeping warm is the primary concern in winter sports. Adequate warm-up activities before starting exercise can prevent muscle strains and raise body temperature to cope with cold environments. It is also important to change sweaty clothes in time after exercise to prevent the body from catching a cold and the subsequent cold. Secondly, the principle of moderation is essential for everyone. Individual differences in physical fitness and health conditions require us to choose the amount of exercise that suits us during winter sports. Moderate exercise can help strengthen physical fitness, while excessive exercise may cause unnecessary burden and damage to the body. Finally, security issues cannot be overlooked. Adverse weather conditions in winter, such as ice or snow, increase the risk of outdoor sports. Therefore, strenuous exercise on these roads should be avoided when playing sports in winter to reduce the risk of falls and injuries. To sum up, by following the three principles of warmth, moderation and safety, we can effectively strengthen the body's cold resistance and immunity through exercise in winter, while laying a solid foundation for vitality and health in spring.

7. Conclusion

Through the research in this paper, the importance of winter health preservation and the necessity of following the principles of the Yellow Emperor's Neijing are emphasized. Through a reasonable diet, daily life and exercise, the body's yang energy can be protected and cultivated, and the ability to resist cold and immunity can be enhanced. We hope that this article can arouse people's attention to traditional health culture, guide people to return to nature, follow the laws of nature, so that they can maintain a good physical and mental state in the cold winter, and taste the beauty of life. This is not only a useful extension of the contemporary lifestyle, but also an inheritance of traditional culture.

References

- [1] Four key points of health preservation in February [J] the construction of the National people's Congress. (2023). (02), 58.
- [2] Fang Xue, Wang Shan, Wang Yongsheng, & Chen Jionghua. (2020). Discussion on summer health preservation without disease in traditional Chinese medicine [J] National Medicine Forum. 35 (04), 56-59.
- [3] GUO Jun-hua, & HE Qing-hu. (2014). Discussion on the health preserving in summer of four seasons [J] Chinese Journal of traditional Chinese Medicine. 29(09), 2731-2733.
- [4] LUAN Hairong, & MENG Lingjun. (2016). Discussing of Keeping in Good Health According to Huangdi Neijing in Winter [J] Clinical journal of traditional Chinese medicine. 28(05), 612-614. doi:10.16448/j.cjtem.2016.0219
- [5] MA Tieming. (2003). A brief Analysis of the concept of time Health Preservation in Huangdi Nei Jing [J] Liaoning Journal of traditional Chinese Medicine. (02), 86-87.
- [6] Five tips for health preservation in autumn [J] Hunan Journal of traditional Chinese Medicine. (2019). 35(11), 167+172.
- [7] WEI Yulin, & YANG Kaiguo. (2024). Traditional Chinese Medicine Theory and Methods Research of Winter Health Preservation [J] Chinese Medicine modern distance Education of China. 22(07), 155-157.
- [8] YE Ming-hua, & JIANG Li-sheng. (2020). Analysis of conform to nature in Huangdi Neijing [J] Chinese Journal of traditional Chinese Medicine. 35(12), 5998-6000.
- [9] Zhang Na, Liu Xiaoyan, & Guo Xiazhen. (2016). The Discussion Based on Concept of "Correspondence between Nature and Human" about Relationship of Four Seasons-Yin Yang-Five Zang Organs [J] World Chinese medicine. 11(02), 224-227.
- [10] ZHONG Yu-mei, LIAO Hua-jun, WEN Xiao-min, XU Cheng-he, HUANG Shi-ying, YU Jie-ying, & ZHU Zhang-zhi. (2020). Application of the visualization thought in health maintenance of traditional Chinese medicine [J] Chinese Journal of traditional Chinese Medicine. 35(03), 1227-1229.
- [11] ZHU Yong-qiang, & DING Ji-shan. (2007). An Analysis of the Health Maintenance in Huangdi's Canon of Medicine in Spring Time [J] Chinese archives of traditional Chinese Medicine. (01), 158-159.
- [12] ZHU Zhang-zhi, LIAO Hua-jun, XU Shuai, CHEN Jun, & ZENG Hui-yu. (2018). Treating diabetes from the aspect of 'shi' in wei qi [J] Chinese Journal of traditional Chinese Medicine. 33(02), 502-504.