

# Exploration of the Strategies and Practices of Seasonal Health Maintenance Based on the Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine

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**Abstract:** This article delves into the concept of seasonal health maintenance in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which is rooted in the ancient philosophical idea of “harmony with nature and unity of heaven and humanity.” It emphasizes the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature, advocating the adjustment of health maintenance strategies according to the changes of the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. In spring, it is advisable to nourish the liver, maintain an orderly lifestyle, adopt a bland diet, and promote the growth of yang energy. Summer focuses on nourishing the heart, emphasizing cooling and heat relief, and moderate exercise to promote perspiration and detoxification. Autumn is the time to nourish the lungs, with a focus on a moist diet, maintaining a peaceful emotional state, and moderate exercise to enhance physical fitness. In winter, the emphasis is on nourishing the kidneys, keeping warm, consuming a warm diet, and reducing outdoor activities to prevent the dissipation of yang energy. Seasonal health maintenance not only concerns daily life and diet but also involves emotional regulation and moderate exercise. It holds inestimable value for enhancing physical fitness, preventing diseases, and promoting healthy longevity. Deepening the research and application of seasonal health maintenance in TCM not only helps to improve the national health quality but is also the key to promoting the modernization and internationalization of TCM health maintenance. It has profound significance for promoting excellent traditional Chinese culture and enhancing human health and well-being.

**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese medicine; Seasonal health maintenance; Unity of heaven and humanity; Harmonization of Yin and Yang

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## 1. Introduction

In today’s society, people’s pace of life is accelerating, and they are often in a state of high-intensity work, high mental stress, and unhealthy lifestyle habits. As a result, the size of the sub-health population has shown a

significant growth trend. According to relevant surveys, in some developed cities, the proportion of the sub-health population has reached more than 70%<sup>[1]</sup>. Although these people do not have a clear diagnosis of any disease, they are often in a state of physical and psychological discomfort, such as fatigue, insomnia, anxiety, and decreased immunity, which seriously affect their quality of life and work efficiency. At the same time, issues such as the side effects and high medical costs caused by excessive reliance on modern medical drugs and surgical treatments have gradually become prominent, prompting people to turn their attention back to natural therapies. Traditional Chinese medicine health maintenance has become an important choice for people to pursue a healthy lifestyle due to its emphasis on the harmonious unity of humans and nature, holistic conditioning, and minimal side effects.

As a treasure of traditional Chinese culture, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) embodies profound life philosophy and wisdom of healthcare. “Harmony between nature and humanity” is a high-level summary of the relationship between humans and nature in TCM, and it also serves as an important guiding principle for TCM healthcare. It suggests that humans live in the natural environment, and various changes in the natural environment can directly or indirectly affect human life activities. Therefore, it advocates adapting to natural laws to nourish and care for the body. The theory of seasonal healthcare is one of the concrete manifestations of the guiding principle of “harmony between nature and humanity”. Its roots can be traced back to the classical TCM text, “Huangdi Neijing”, which contains healthcare principles such as “following the laws of Yin and Yang, harmonizing with the techniques of numbers, eating and drinking with moderation, living with regularity, and avoiding excessive labor.” These principles establish a lifestyle and healthcare strategy that follows the changes and characteristics of the four seasons: “spring growth, summer flourishing, autumn harvest, and winter storage”. The TCM theory of seasonal healthcare advocates adapting to natural changes by adjusting diet, daily life, exercise, emotions, and other aspects to achieve the goal of healthcare. This natural and gentle approach to healthcare aligns with modern people’s pursuit of health and return to nature, providing new ideas and methods for addressing modern health issues. Based on TCM theories such as “harmony between nature and humanity”, this article aims to analyze seasonal healthcare strategies and explore related practical paths.

## **2. Theoretical basis**

### **2.1. Harmony between nature and humanity**

“Unity of Heaven and Man” refers to the concept that heaven, earth, and humans originate from the same Qi (vital energy) and are intimately interconnected. By observing the interactions between heaven and man, it explores the shared laws governing their mutual influence and resonance. This idea closely aligns with the guiding principle of holism in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), particularly the unity between humans and the natural environment. As stated in Suwen·Tian Yuan Ji Da Lun: “Heaven governs the five elements to regulate the five positions, generating cold, heat, dryness, dampness, and wind. Humans possess the five viscera that transform into five Qi, giving rise to joy, anger, contemplation, sorrow, and fear.”

This illustrates how TCM correlates the structure and changes of the human body with those of nature, analyzing the laws of human life—viewed as a microcosm—through the essence and phenomena of the macrocosm (heaven and earth). For example, Wu Yi Hui Jiang·Ren Shen Yi Xiao Tian Di Lun records: “Humans are endowed with the virtues of vigor and harmony, born from the qi of the five elements, which are concealed in the five viscera and manifested in the six bowels. Breathing resembles the movement of yin and yang; body fluids are like the irrigation of rain and dew; luster mirrors the flourishing of plants; the eyes and ears reflect the

waxing and waning of the sun and moon. Truly, the human body is a small universe!” The alternation of seasons and climatic changes in nature are closely linked to human physiology and pathology. This perspective transcends the limitation of viewing the human body solely in terms of its physiological structure and function. For instance, the ”six excesses”—a key pathogenic factor in TCM—refer to wind, cold, summer heat, dampness, dryness, and fire, which become harmful when natural climatic changes are abnormal or when the body’s resistance declines. Under normal conditions, these are called the ”six Qi”, representing natural climatic variations. However, when ”pathogenic factors prevail” or ”vital Qi weakens”, the body fails to adapt, leading to disease. Thus, harmony with nature is a crucial factor in maintaining human health.

## **2.2. Seasonal health maintenance**

Humans are born from the Qi of heaven and earth and grow according to the laws of the four seasons. Living between heaven and earth, humans are closely connected to the changes of the four seasons. As stated in the “Su Wen: Si Ji Tiao Shen Da Lun” (Basic Questions of Chinese Medicine: Great Discussion on Regulating the Spirit in the Four Seasons), “When thief-like winds frequently blow and torrential rains often fall, heaven and earth lose their harmony with the four seasons and deviate from the natural way, leading to premature destruction. Only the sage follows the natural way, so his body remains healthy and free from extraordinary diseases, and all things are preserved without loss, maintaining a continuous flow of vital Qi.” Seasonal health maintenance involves adapting to the changing laws of the four seasons and adopting corresponding health preservation methods to maintain physical health and prevent diseases.

## **3. Spring**

### **3.1. Spring health maintenance, liver care comes first**

Spring represents growth and vitality. In spring, Yang Qi rises, and human liver Qi also rises accordingly, echoing the Qi of heaven and earth. As stated in the “Basic Questions of Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic: On the Corresponding Manifestations of Yin and Yang”, the liver corresponds to spring. In nature, it corresponds to wind and wood, in the body, it corresponds to tendons, and in the organs, it corresponds to the liver. The liver, in harmony with wind and trees in nature, bears the characteristics of dispersal and growth, further reflecting the close relationship between liver Qi and the breath of spring.

According to the “Basic Questions of Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic: On the Secret Classics of Linglan”, the liver is like a general, responsible for planning and strategizing.” It is mainly responsible for dispersion and regulating Qi. If liver Qi can be dispersed normally in harmony with the spring Qi, its physiological functions will operate normally:

#### **(1) Normal mental state, cheerful mood, and peaceful mindset**

As stated in the “Miraculous Pivot: On the Abstinence of Normal People”, “When the blood vessels are harmonious and smooth, the spirit resides.” The liver is responsible for storing blood and dispersing Qi. When liver Qi is harmonious, it can harmonize Qi and blood, and regulate mental state.

#### **(2) Normal spleen ascending and stomach descending, food digestion, and nutrient absorption**

As mentioned in “Blood Syndrome Theory: On the Pathogenesis of Zang-Fu Organs”, the nature of wood is dispersion. When food enters the stomach, it relies entirely on the liver wood to disperse it, so that water and grain can be digested. If the liver’s clear yang does not rise, it cannot disperse water and

grain, and symptoms of indigestion and distension are unavoidable. The spleen and stomach are located in the middle jiao. The spleen is responsible for ascending clarity, while the stomach is responsible for descending and harmonizing. Normal dispersion of liver Qi can coordinate the ascending of the spleen and descending of the stomach, allowing the body's Qi to operate normally and nutrients to be properly transported and transformed.

(3) Normal bile secretion

The saying "liver and gallbladder are closely connected" indicates that the liver and gallbladder are externally and internally related, and their physiological functions are closely related. As stated in "Dongyi Baojian", "The remaining Qi of the liver is dispersed in the gallbladder and accumulates to form essence." Bile is a subtle material generated by the transformation of liver essence and Qi. In modern medicine, bile aids in digestion, mainly of fatty foods, and its secretion and excretion are also completed under the dispersing action of liver Qi.

(4) Normal blood circulation

"Qi is the commander of blood, and blood is the mother of Qi." When Qi moves, blood moves, and the liver is responsible for storing blood. Therefore, normal liver Qi can maintain normal blood circulation.

(5) Normal distribution of body fluids

As mentioned in "Jisheng Fang: On the Treatment of Phlegm and Retention", the airway of the human body is valued for its smoothness. When it is smooth, body fluids circulate freely, and there is absolutely no trouble with phlegm and retention. Qi can promote the distribution of body fluids. Therefore, normal liver qi can maintain the normal distribution of body fluids.

(6) Normal ejaculation for men and menstruation for women

As stated in the "Miraculous Pivot: Meridians", "The liver's foot-jueyin meridian passes through the genitals and reaches the lower abdomen." Normal dispersion of liver Qi allows normal ejaculation for men, regular ovulation for women, and regular menstruation. Additionally, as mentioned in the "Guidance for Clinical Practice: Menstrual Regulation", "Women prioritize the liver and utilize blood."

If the liver Qi fails to correspond with the spring Qi, leading to liver Qi imbalance, loss of dispersion and regulation, and poor Qi flow, abnormal physiological activities in the human body may occur, manifesting as follows:

- (1) According to "Ling Shu: Ben Shen", "When liver Qi is deficient, there is fear; when it is excessive, there is anger." This may lead to emotional depression or hyperactivity, and irritability.
- (2) Discord between the liver and spleen can cause spleen dysfunction, loss of appetite, abdominal distension, and diarrhea. When liver Qi invades the stomach, it can cause stomach dysfunction, leading to anorexia, hiccups, and vomiting.
- (3) Digestive abnormalities and loss of appetite may occur, and bile stagnation can lead to the formation of stones.
- (4) Symptoms may include hematemesis, hemoptysis, and internal resistance due to blood stasis.
- (5) There may be symptoms of dampness and phlegm retention, such as plum-pit qi, goiter, scrofula, and edema.
- (6) Male ejaculatory dysfunction can lead to seminal stagnation, and excessive liver fire dispersion can cause nocturnal emission. Female liver Qi stagnation can lead to delayed menstruation and menstrual pain, while excessive liver fire can cause early menstruation and uterine bleeding.



### 3.2. Daily habits

According to “Su Wen: Si Qi Tiao Shen Da Lun”, “In the spring of March, one should sleep late and rise early, walking extensively in the courtyard.” In spring, one should go to bed late and wake up early. Every morning when the sun rises, Yang Qi is most abundant. As stated in “Su Wen: Sheng Qi Tong Tian Lun”, “Yang Qi is like the sky and the sun. If it loses its place, it will shorten its lifespan and not manifest its essence.” This shows the important role of Yang Qi in the human body. After waking up, one should go out and engage in activities to absorb enough Yang Qi, allowing the Yang Qi in the body to invigorate the Qi mechanism and rise, thereby clearing the liver Qi and dispersing the cold Qi stored in the body during winter <sup>[2]</sup>.

### 3.3. Diet

“Qian Jin Fang” states, “In the seventy-two days of spring, reduce sour and increase sweet to nourish the spleen Qi.” “Su Wen: Yin Yang Ying Xiang Da Lun” also says, “Sour hurts the tendons, pungent overcomes sour”, “Sweet hurts the flesh, sour overcomes sweet.” In spring, one should eat more sweet foods and less sour foods. In traditional Chinese medicine, the spleen and stomach are the roots of health, and weakness in spleen and stomach function can lead to many diseases. Therefore, eating more sweet foods can nourish the spleen and stomach to maintain health. Spring belongs to the wood element, and illnesses often harm the liver. Sour foods enter the liver meridian, and excessive consumption of sour foods can make liver fire excessive.

In terms of diet, eating liver can nourish the liver, and chicken liver is particularly effective. Additionally, one should consume more fresh fruits and vegetables, avoid spicy, fried, and stimulating foods as well as alcohol, reduce the intake of animal fats to avoid increasing the burden on the liver. Foods such as spinach (nourishing Yin and moistening dryness, soothing the liver and nourishing blood), bean sprouts (boosting yang energy), leeks (enhancing the Qi of the spleen and stomach), scallions and garlic (nourishing the liver and benefiting yang), jujubes (nourishing the spleen and stomach), buckwheat, shepherd’s purse, celery, chrysanthemum sprouts, lettuce, eggplant, water chestnuts, cucumbers, mushrooms (with a cool nature and sweet taste, can nourish the liver and improve vision). To nourish liver Yin, one can consume moistening foods such as white fungus <sup>[3]</sup>.

### 3.4. Emotions

In terms of emotions, according to “Su Wen: Yin Yang Ying Xiang Da Lun”: “The liver corresponds to anger in emotions, and anger harms the liver.” When encountering difficulties, it is important to vent emotions in a timely manner, avoid excessive emotional reactions, and prevent liver qi stagnation. “Yi Chun Sheng Yi” suggests: “The method of nourishing the liver is to avoid anger and cultivate one’s nature.” Engage in calming activities and gentle exercises such as painting, calligraphy, listening to music, playing chess, planting flowers, fishing, practicing Tai Chi, and Baduanjin.

### 3.5. Others

According to “Su Wen: Jin Kui Zhen Yan Lun”: “The east is associated with the color green, which corresponds to the liver, and the liver opens into the eyes. The essence is stored in the liver.” “Ling Shu: Mai Du” also states: “The liver Qi is connected to the eyes. When the liver is harmonious, the eyes can distinguish five colors.” Since the liver opens into the eyes, nourishing the eyes is essential for nourishing the liver in spring. When the eyes are nourished, the liver’s essence and blood are abundant. Therefore, in spring, one should close their eyes more often to rest and nourish the eyes, or gently press the eyelids with the index finger, rubbing until the eyes feel warm and

slightly swollen, calming irritation and anger. Alternatively, one can rotate their eyes to relieve fatigue.

## **4. Summer**

### **4.1. Summer health maintenance: Focusing on heart care**

#### **4.1.1. Core concepts and theoretical basis of summer health maintenance**

In summer, everything is lush and full of vitality, and the high temperatures of midsummer are even more intense. While enjoying the summer sunshine and vitality, we cannot ignore the unique health maintenance practices of summer. Summer is hot, and yang energy is at its peak<sup>[1]</sup>. The heart is the organ with the most yang energy among the five viscera, corresponding to the Qi of heaven and earth. Therefore, nurturing the heart in summer is essential to protect the foundation of life<sup>[5]</sup>. The focus should be on calming and clearing the mind, nourishing heart Yang, heart Yin, and heart blood. The diet should be mainly bland. If the body is troubled by pathogenic factors such as cold, dampness, and deficiency, leading to a cold and deficient constitution, respiratory system problems, and bone and joint issues, we can take advantage of the abundant Yang energy in summer to regulate and eliminate pathogenic factors, thereby relieving pain.

### **4.2. Key points of summer health maintenance at different times**

There is a saying about summer health maintenance in terms of organs, meridians, and veins: “Nurture the stomach in the morning, nurture the heart at noon, and nurture all meridians in the evening.”<sup>[4]</sup>

#### **4.2.1. Nurturing the stomach in the morning**

Morning is the best time to nurture the stomach. The spleen and stomach are the “foundation of acquired constitution” and the source of Qi and blood production in the human body. To nurture the stomach, the first step is to have breakfast every day. Choose some easily digestible foods such as porridge and noodles, and combine them with fresh vegetables and fruits to provide adequate nutrition. Avoid prolonged fasting to prevent damage to the gastric mucosa. Drinking a cup of warm water after waking up can help cleanse the intestines and stomach, promote intestinal peristalsis, and aid in bowel movements.

#### **4.2.2. Nurturing the heart at noon**

During noon, the sunlight is extremely intense and the temperature is high. The body’s metabolism is vigorous, blood circulation accelerates, and the burden on the heart increases. Therefore, nurturing the heart at noon is crucial for summertime health maintenance. Firstly, it is important to have a bland diet at noon. Due to the high temperature in summer and increased sweating, the body can easily lose water and salt. Hence, it is advisable to consume light and easily digestible foods, avoiding excessively greasy and spicy dishes. Foods that have a cooling effect, nourish yin, and alleviate irritation, such as cucumber, winter melon, loofah, as well as kelp and mung bean soup, or chrysanthemum tea, are good choices. However, it is important not to overindulge to prevent increasing internal dampness<sup>[6]</sup>. Secondly, emotional regulation is also essential. People often feel restless and uneasy during noon. At this time, relaxing activities like listening to music or reading can help ease the mind and relieve stress. Maintaining a peaceful state of mind contributes to reducing the burden on the heart and promoting heart health. Lastly, taking a short nap can help alleviate fatigue, but the duration should not be too long.

### 4.2.3. Nurturing the meridians in the evening

The evening is the prime time for body repair and health maintenance. Therefore, it is essential to ensure adequate sleep, allowing the body's functions to fully recover. Engaging in appropriate exercise after dinner can promote metabolism, accelerate blood circulation, and relieve stress.

## 4.3. Summer daily habits and dietary health maintenance

According to “Su Wen: On the Grand Theory of the Four Qi Adjustments,” it is recommended to “sleep late and rise early, without aversion to the sunlight.” This suggests adjusting daily habits by going to bed late and waking up early. In the hot summer climate, it is advisable to rise early in harmony with the abundance of Yang energy and to sleep late in accordance with the deficiency of Yin energy.

“Qian Jin Fang” states: “In summer, for seventy-two days, reduce bitter foods and increase pungent foods to nourish lung Qi.” In terms of diet, summer meals should minimize or avoid fatty, greasy, spicy, and fried foods. Instead, opt for low-salt, low-fat, low-sugar, low-cholesterol, and low-irritant foods that are light, refreshing, and calming, such as *Poria cocos*, lotus seeds, lilies, and small dates. Additionally, consume foods that nourish yin and generate body fluids, like lotus root powder, white fungus, watermelon, duck meat, pears, and apples. Bitter foods like bitter melon, bitter melon, bitter melon, and lotus seed hearts can nourish Yin, clear heat, and relieve restlessness. However, because “bitterness enters the heart,” bitter foods can aid heart Qi but suppress lung Qi, so excessive consumption is not recommended. People with deficient lung Qi can eat more pungent foods, and ginger, being pungent, is particularly suitable for summer consumption.

Despite the summer heat, it's important to avoid excessive pursuit of coolness <sup>[5]</sup>. The temperature difference between the air-conditioned room and the outdoors should not be too large, otherwise, it can easily lead to summer colds. Avoid consuming too many cold foods and drinks to prevent damaging the spleen and stomach. Avoid excessive physical activity and tiredness, as profuse sweating can lead to excessive loss of essential nutrients in the body. Moreover, “overexertion depletes Qi,” and excessive fatigue can also damage heart Qi, which is not conducive to heart nourishment in summer.

## 5. Autumn

### 5.1. Health maintenance in autumn: focusing on lung nourishment, moisturizing dryness, and generating body fluids

#### 5.1.1. Key points and theoretical support for autumn health maintenance

In autumn, the high temperatures of summer have subsided, and people's restless emotions have calmed down accordingly. Since summer often leads to excessive depletion, it is essential to replenish these losses during autumn, making health maintenance particularly crucial during this season. Autumn brings cool, dry weather, and the lung Qi tends to descend. The lungs are delicate organs that prefer moisture and dislike dryness. Symptoms such as susceptibility to illness, dry cough, pharyngitis, and rhinitis may arise from lung Qi deficiency. Therefore, it is advisable to nourish the lungs, moisturize dryness, generate body fluids, and enhance lung function during the crisp autumn weather.

### 5.2. Autumn lifestyle and health maintenance

“Su Wen: On the Great Discussion of the Four Qi and the Regulation of the Spirits” states: “Go to bed early and

rise early, following the rhythm of the chicken.” As autumn nights gradually become longer, it is advisable to go to bed early to harmonize with the storage of yin essence and rise early to promote the flow of Yang Qi. Staying up late can deplete the body’s Yin essence and exacerbate symptoms of autumn dryness, so it should be avoided as much as possible. In daily life, attention should be paid to keeping warm, adding appropriate clothing in the morning and evening to prevent cold invasion. When exercising, gentle activities such as yoga and qigong are recommended, which can help nourish lung Qi and enhance physical fitness. Soaking feet in warm water before bedtime can help dispel cold and promote sleep. Acupoint massage, such as Zhongfu, Feishu, Dazhui, Lieque, Zusanli, and Taixi, can be used for health maintenance, helping to strengthen the lungs. Acupoint massage is a simple and effective method for regulating the body’s Qi, blood, and Yin-Yang balance by stimulating specific acupoints<sup>[7]</sup>. Additionally, attention should be paid to the high incidence of allergic dermatitis in autumn, maintaining indoor cleanliness and hygiene to prevent dust mites and mold.

### **5.3. Autumn diet and health maintenance**

“Qian Jin Fang” advises: “During the seventy-two days of autumn, reduce pungent foods and increase sour foods to nourish liver Qi.” Pungent foods have a dispersing and draining effect on the lungs, so it is best to minimize spicy foods such as peppers and Sichuan peppercorns to avoid damaging lung Qi. A light diet is ideal, and it is advisable to choose seasonal vegetables and fruits. White-colored foods can nourish the lungs, benefit lung Qi, nourish lung Yin, and prevent autumn dryness. Examples include white foods such as lily bulbs, Chinese yam, lotus root, Chinese cabbage, winter melon, white fungus, lotus seedpod, and autumn pear. Simple and easy-to-prepare medicinal and edible dishes such as white fungus and lily bulb soup, rock sugar stewed snow pear, and lotus root stewed with pork ribs are recommended. Sour foods have a constricting effect on lung Qi, so they can be consumed in moderation, such as Chinese hawthorn, dark plum, pomelo, and citrus fruits<sup>[8]</sup>. Additionally, moderate alcohol consumption can be used to promote Qi and blood circulation and warm the body.

### **5.4. Emotional health maintenance in autumn**

In terms of emotions: “Calm the mind, ease the autumn’s severity, gather the spirit, balance the autumn Qi, don’t let your ambition wander, and keep the lung Qi clear.” Autumn corresponds to the lungs, and sorrow hurts the lungs. Autumn can easily evoke feelings of sadness and melancholy, so it’s important to maintain a calm and peaceful state of mind. It’s essential to adjust emotions in a timely manner, maintain a balanced attitude, and avoid excessive sorrow to prevent damage to lung Qi.

## **6. Winter**

### **6.1. Winter health maintenance: Focusing on kidney health and storing essence**

#### **6.1.1. Key aspects and theoretical origins of winter health maintenance**

In the cold winter months, everything is covered in snow, and all things are stored away, quietly waiting for spring’s return. Winter is a time for recuperation, adjusting daily routines and attitudes to nourish the body and accumulate energy. Winter health maintenance should focus on warmth, nourishment, and tranquility. Through reasonable diet, daily routines, exercise, and psychological adjustment, one can enhance physical fitness, prevent diseases, and maintain warmth and vitality in the cold season.

Winter emphasizes storage, and the kidneys are responsible for storing essence, which is the foundation of

sealing and storing. Winter health maintenance emphasizes “storing essence and nourishing the kidneys.” The kidneys are the foundation of prenatal health and govern the body’s growth, development, and reproductive functions. Therefore, it’s important to keep warm in winter, especially the feet and waist, to prevent cold pathogens from invading the body. Those with kidney problems need to conserve their energy. Only with sufficient kidney essence can one avoid illnesses in the coming year.

## **6.2. Daily routines for winter health maintenance**

According to the “Basic Questions of Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine: On Regulating the Spirits According to the Four Seasons,” it is recommended to “go to bed early and rise late, waiting for the sunlight.” Winter brings cold weather, so it’s advisable to go to bed early and get up late, waiting for the sun to rise and shine, to avoid cold pathogens, seek warmth, and prevent disturbance to Yang Qi. This practice helps to fend off the common cold pathogens that invade the human body in winter<sup>[9]</sup>.

“Do not excessively perspire, which would lead to frequent loss of Qi.” “Perspire” refers to the opening and draining of the skin, that is, excessive sweating. Too much sweating can consume qi and damage yang. Winter is the time for Yang Qi to be stored, and the skin should also be correspondingly closed and not excessively opened. Therefore, winter exercise should be moderate, with more emphasis on static practices.

## **6.3. Winter dietary health**

“Qian Jin Fang” states: “In winter, for seventy-two days, reduce salt and increase bitterness to nourish the heart Qi.” Salt enters the kidneys, and excessive consumption of salty foods in winter can easily damage kidney essence. In cold weather, it is appropriate to eat some warming foods such as lamb, beef, pigeon, sea cucumber, and goji berries, which can benefit the kidneys, strengthen Yang, tonify Qi, and generate blood, helping the body resist cold. Winter corresponds to black foods such as black rice, black beans, and black sesame. In Chinese medicine, they are believed to nourish the kidneys. In winter, Yang Qi is deficient and Yin Qi is abundant. It is important to protect yang. Foods such as leeks, longan meat, Chinese yam, and walnuts can be chosen for the diet<sup>[9]</sup>. Recommended dishes include Five Black Kidney-Tonifying Porridge, Chestnut Porridge, Baizhu Huaishan Porridge, and Leek Porridge<sup>[10]</sup>.

## **6.4. Winter emotional health**

In terms of emotions, winter is a time of withering for all things, which can easily lead to negative and depressive emotions. However, “joy brings harmony to Qi and will, and smooth flow to nutritive and defensive Qi.” Good emotions help to promote the circulation of Qi and blood and the normal functioning of the organs.

## **6.5. Other health suggestions**

In terms of meridians, the Zhaohai acupoint can be used to nourish the kidneys and maintain health. It can also treat various conditions such as insomnia and dry throat. The Zhaohai acupoint is one of the acupoints of the Foot Shaoyin Kidney Meridian and one of the Eight Extraordinary Meridians’ intersecting points. It is the intersection of the Kidney Meridian and the Yin Qiao Meridian, and has a bidirectional regulatory effect that balances yin and yang, nourishing yin without injuring yang, and warming yang without damaging yin. It is suitable for gentle nourishment in winter<sup>[10]</sup>.

## 7. Conclusion

In summary, the concept of seasonal health preservation in traditional Chinese medicine, as a treasure in the field of Chinese medicine health preservation, emphasizes that human physiological functions should follow the natural laws of seasonal changes. Through strategies such as harmonizing Yin and Yang, strengthening the body's foundation, and nurturing vitality, the goal is to enhance physical fitness, prevent diseases, and promote healthy longevity. Specifically, spring health preservation focuses on supporting Yang and suppressing Yin, nourishing the liver; summer emphasizes clearing the heart, preventing heatstroke, and promoting Qi and generating fluids; autumn requires nourishing the lungs and Yin, and gathering the spirit; winter focuses on warming and nourishing kidney Yang, storing essence, and gathering Qi. This philosophy not only deeply reflects the holistic view of “harmony between nature and humanity” in traditional Chinese medicine, but also provides modern people with wisdom for maintaining health by following natural laws and achieving physical and mental harmony. Therefore, deepening the exploration and application of the theory of seasonal health preservation in traditional Chinese medicine, and combining it with modern technological means for innovative practice, has profound scientific value and social significance for improving the health quality of the nation and promoting the development of traditional Chinese medicine health preservation. It deserves further exploration.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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