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Children & Family Wellness

Sleep, appetite, common childhood concerns and safer TCM conversations

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This guide is designed to be read, saved and shared. It uses practical language, keeps TCM terminology in context and clearly separates general education from symptoms that need medical assessment.

Before you begin

Children are not simply smaller adults. Age, weight, hydration, medicines and the pace at which symptoms change all matter. This guide helps parents prepare useful observations, understand where TCM may be discussed responsibly and recognise when a child needs conventional medical care first.

What this book is designed to do

A practical reading approach

- Explain the topic in plain language without turning TCM terminology into a biomedical diagnosis.
- Help you notice useful patterns: timing, triggers, medicines, habits, associated symptoms and change over time.
- Show where everyday self-care may be reasonable and where medical review should come first.
- Make consultation more useful by helping you arrive with clearer information and questions.

A safety note

Emergency or red-flag symptoms come before complementary care. Tell healthcare professionals about prescription medicines, over-the-counter products, herbs, supplements, pregnancy, allergies and important chronic conditions.

CHAPTER 01

TCM for Children: What Parents Should Know Before the First Visit



A safety-first guide for parents considering TCM for a child, including medicines, age, hydration, fever, breathing and when paediatric medical care comes first.

Key points

- Children are not simply small adults; age and weight affect safety.
- Bring the child's medicine and supplement list.
- Breathing difficulty, dehydration, unusual drowsiness or serious illness needs prompt medical care.

Start with the child's age and main concern

Tell the practitioner the child's age, weight, symptoms, duration, medical diagnoses, allergies and current medicines. Bring relevant clinic or hospital information if the child is under specialist care.

Be cautious with herbal products

Children can be more sensitive to dosing errors and ingredients. Do not assume a product is safe because it is herbal, traditional or recommended by a friend. Ask exactly what is being given, the dose, duration and what side effects to watch for.

Keep routine medical care in place

Vaccinations, paediatric follow-up and prescribed medicines should not be stopped because TCM is being tried. If the child has asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, severe allergies or another chronic condition, coordination with the child's medical team is especially important.

Comfort matters during treatment

Explain procedures in age-appropriate language. A child who is frightened or resisting should not be forced through a non-urgent treatment simply to complete a session. Ask whether gentler alternatives are appropriate.

Know the red flags

Seek prompt medical care for breathing difficulty, blue lips, unusual drowsiness, seizures, severe dehydration, persistent vomiting, a stiff neck with fever, a rapidly worsening rash, serious injury or any situation where the child appears very unwell.

For children, details and age matter

Bring the child's age, weight if known, medicines, allergies, vaccination or medical information that is relevant, and a clear description of eating, drinking, fever, breathing, sleep and behaviour. Ask what is appropriate for the child's age, what should be avoided, and which symptoms mean paediatric or emergency medical care should come first.

Keep the child's baseline in mind

Parents know what is normal for their child. Track changes in drinking, urination, appetite, sleep, playfulness, fever and breathing rather than focusing on one isolated symptom. A child who is unusually sleepy, struggling to breathe, dehydrated or rapidly worsening needs medical care. Complementary approaches should be considered only after those basic safety questions are answered.

CHAPTER 02

Children, Appetite and Digestion: What Parents Can Observe

Children do not eat exactly the same amount every day. Growth spurts, illness, sleep and activity can all change appetite.

Key points

- Look at the child, not just one meal.
- Persistent vomiting, blood in stool, dehydration, severe pain or poor growth need medical assessment.
- Keep herbal and supplement use age-appropriate and transparent to the child's doctor.

Appetite naturally varies

Toddlers and school-age children may eat more on some days and less on others. Pressure at the table can make eating more stressful. Keep regular meal and snack times, offer familiar foods alongside new ones, and observe energy, growth and hydration rather than chasing a fixed portion size.

Bowel habits are part of the picture

Constipation, loose stools and abdominal discomfort can influence appetite. Record stool frequency, pain, bloating, recent infections, new foods and medicines. A short record is often more useful than describing the child as having a "weak stomach".

How TCM may be discussed

A paediatric TCM consultation may ask about appetite, stool, sleep, sweating, recurrent illness and energy. Any treatment should be age-appropriate, explained to parents and never used to delay assessment of persistent or worrying symptoms.

Red flags parents should not wait on

Seek medical advice for repeated vomiting, blood in vomit or stool, severe abdominal pain, persistent fever, dehydration, unexplained weight loss or poor growth, unusual sleepiness, or symptoms in a very young infant.

Make changes one at a time

If you are changing breakfast, fibre, fluids, meal timing or a supplement, avoid changing everything at once. One change at a time makes it easier to know what actually helped.

CHAPTER 03

When a Child Keeps Coughing: What to Track and When to Seek Review



Children catch many respiratory infections, but a cough that keeps returning can also be linked to asthma, allergies, reflux or other causes.

Key points

- Breathing difficulty, blue lips or severe lethargy are urgent warning signs.
- Track timing, triggers, fever, wheeze and nighttime symptoms.
- TCM support should never delay assessment of persistent or difficult breathing.

Describe the cough

Is it mainly at night, after exercise, with colds, in air-conditioning or around dust? Is there wheeze, fever, phlegm, vomiting or breathlessness? Does the child wake from coughing? These details help distinguish a simple viral pattern from something that may need further assessment.

Consider common contributors

Repeated viral infections are common in young children, especially in childcare. Asthma, allergic rhinitis, sinus problems, reflux and environmental smoke can also contribute. A doctor can decide whether examination, inhaler review or other tests are needed.

Urgent breathing signs

Seek urgent medical care if the child is breathing very fast, struggling for breath, has bluish lips, is unusually drowsy, cannot drink properly or seems severely unwell. Do not wait for a TCM appointment in this situation.

TCM as complementary care

A TCM consultation may discuss symptoms, sleep, appetite and recurrent illness within the traditional framework. Any herbs or products used in a child should be age-appropriate, clearly labelled and disclosed to the child's doctor.

Bring a useful history

Note how long each episode lasts, whether symptoms disappear completely between episodes, any wheeze, family history of asthma or allergy, smoke exposure, and what medicines have already been tried.

CHAPTER 04

Blocked or Runny Nose in Singapore: Rhinitis, Environment and TCM Support

A straightforward overview of preparation, common sensations, hygiene and when to tell your practitioner about medical conditions.

Key points

- A blocked or runny nose can have allergic, infectious, environmental or structural causes.
- Note triggers such as dust, pets, haze, air-conditioning, exercise and time of day.
- Breathing difficulty, facial swelling or severe systemic symptoms need prompt medical attention.

“Seasonal” symptoms can happen all year here

Singapore does not have a cold winter season, but nasal symptoms can still fluctuate with rain, haze, dust, air-conditioning, indoor mould, pets or infections. It helps to notice where and when symptoms happen rather than assuming the weather alone is responsible.

Observe the pattern

Record whether symptoms are mainly sneezing, watery discharge, blockage, itch, facial pressure or reduced smell. Note fever, cough, eye symptoms and obvious triggers. Persistent or recurrent symptoms may need a medical diagnosis, especially if they disturb sleep or breathing.

How TCM may frame support

A TCM practitioner may ask about nasal symptoms alongside digestion, sleep, energy, temperature preferences and other observations. Traditional pattern terminology may guide TCM care, but it does not replace assessment for allergies, sinus disease, asthma or other respiratory conditions.

Practical environmental steps

Keep bedding and frequently used surfaces clean, address obvious dampness or mould, and consider whether very cold dry air from air-conditioning worsens symptoms. Avoid smoke and known personal triggers where possible. Saline rinsing or medicines should be used appropriately and, when unsure, discussed with a pharmacist or doctor.

When to seek medical care

Seek medical attention for breathing difficulty, wheezing that is new or severe, facial swelling, high fever, severe facial pain, dehydration, or symptoms that are persistent and significantly affecting sleep or daily function. Call 995 for severe breathing difficulty or other emergencies.

Adapt advice to Singapore rather than a four-season script

Notice whether heat, humidity, rain, haze, air-conditioning, travel or indoor environments change your symptoms. Ask which advice is simply general lifestyle support, what is based on TCM tradition, and what symptoms require modern medical diagnosis. The useful goal is adaptation, not forcing Singapore life into a climate pattern that does not fit.

Build your own Singapore trigger map

Instead of assuming every symptom is caused by “heat” or “dampness”, note whether it appears after haze, rain, outdoor heat, a cold office, travel, poor sleep or a particular indoor environment. This keeps traditional lifestyle ideas connected to your real surroundings and helps separate a useful observation from a vague label that could fit almost anything.

CHAPTER 05

Better Sleep Habits for Busy Singapore Adults



A realistic sleep checklist for long workdays, late meals, screens, caffeine and air-conditioning in Singapore.

Key points

- Consistency matters more than perfection.
- Late caffeine, alcohol, heavy meals and bright screens can all interfere with sleep.
- If tiredness is persistent despite enough time in bed, look for a medical cause.

Start with your actual schedule

Many sleep plans fail because they assume an ideal day. Begin with the time you realistically need to wake for work or family. Work backwards to create enough opportunity for sleep, then keep that wake time reasonably stable even on weekends.

Watch the “Singapore late night” pattern

Late dinners, supper, work messages and scrolling can all push sleep later. Caffeine can also appear in kopi, tea, energy drinks and chocolate. You do not need to remove everything at once; identify the one or two habits most likely to keep you awake and adjust them first.

Make air-conditioning work for you

A comfortable, cool room can support sleep, but very cold or dry air may be uncomfortable for some people. Adjust the temperature, airflow and bedding so you are not waking because you feel too cold, dry or congested.

Use TCM as an addition, not an excuse

If you choose acupuncture, Tuina or a TCM consultation for stress or sleep concerns, still keep the basic sleep habits in place. Traditional care works best as part of a sensible overall plan, not as permission to ignore routines that are clearly disrupting sleep.

Persistent fatigue deserves attention

If you regularly get enough time in bed but remain exhausted, or if you snore loudly, wake gasping, have morning headaches or struggle to stay awake during the day, speak with a doctor. These can be clues that the problem is more than simple sleep hygiene.

Make the next conversation more useful

Before your appointment, note the timing and frequency of the problem, sleep and waking times, caffeine and alcohol, medicines, stressors and any symptoms such as snoring, breathlessness, pain or reflux. Useful questions include: What ordinary causes should I rule out? Which changes are worth trying first? How will we know whether the plan is helping? When should I seek conventional medical assessment instead?

Try a short observation period

For seven to fourteen days, keep the experiment simple. Record bedtime, wake time, night waking, naps, caffeine, alcohol, late meals, exercise and major stress. If you change something, change only one or two variables at a time. A small diary cannot diagnose a sleep disorder, but it can show whether your problem is linked with schedule, environment or particular habits and gives a clinician something more concrete to work with.

CHAPTER 06

Everyday TCM Food Therapy: A Practical Singapore Guide

Use TCM food traditions as inspiration for everyday meals without turning ingredients into medicines or making cure claims.

Key points

- Food therapy should support ordinary nutrition, not replace medical treatment.
- “Warming” and “cooling” are traditional categories, not literal temperature measurements.
- A varied diet is usually more useful than obsessing over one “superfood”.

Food first, medicine second

Traditional Chinese food therapy has a long history, but everyday meals should remain meals. Ginger, pear, red dates, barley, soups and herbal-style dishes can be enjoyed as food without promising that one ingredient will cure a disease.

Understand the traditional vocabulary

Terms such as warming, cooling, moistening or drying describe traditional qualities and patterns. They are not the same as calories, vitamins, glycaemic index or the physical temperature of a dish. It is useful to keep the two systems distinct.

Build a meal, not a remedy cabinet

A practical plate still needs enough protein, vegetables, staple foods and overall variety. Soups can be nourishing, but very salty soup or large portions may not suit everyone. People with diabetes, kidney disease or other conditions should follow medical dietary advice.

Use personal response as information

If a food repeatedly causes bloating, reflux, allergy symptoms or diarrhoea, that matters more than whether a chart labels it “warming” or “cooling”. Keep notes if necessary and discuss persistent reactions with a healthcare professional.

Be careful with medicinal herbs in cooking

When a recipe uses ingredients in medicinal quantities or unfamiliar herbs, the line between food and medicine can become less clear. Pregnancy, medicines and chronic conditions can change what is appropriate, so ask a qualified practitioner when in doubt.

Keep food advice practical

A food tradition can be useful without turning every meal into medicine. Ask whether the suggestion fits your actual diet, allergies and medical conditions, what evidence or tradition it comes from, and whether it is intended as general nourishment or a treatment claim. Sustainable meals usually matter more than one special ingredient.

Think in meals, not miracle ingredients

Rather than adding many special ingredients, look at what a normal week of meals actually contains. Regular meals, adequate protein, vegetables, fibre and appropriate hydration form the background against which traditional food ideas can be used. If one ingredient is promoted as solving many unrelated problems, treat the claim cautiously and keep expectations proportional.

CHAPTER 07

Your First TCM Consultation in Singapore: What to Expect



A practical guide to preparing for a TCM consultation, what information to bring and what a careful assessment may involve.

Before you go

Write down your main concern, how long it has been present and what makes it better or worse. Bring a list of prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Relevant medical reports can also help the practitioner understand context.

What the practitioner may ask

A TCM consultation may include questions about sleep, appetite, digestion, energy, temperature preferences and other patterns in addition to the main complaint. The purpose is to understand the person as a whole rather than to rely on one symptom alone.

What you should ask

Ask what the practitioner is considering, what the proposed approach involves, how long a session takes, what it costs and whether there are reasons it may not be suitable for you.

When conventional medical care comes first

Sudden severe symptoms, chest pain, difficulty breathing, loss of consciousness, major bleeding, stroke-like symptoms or rapidly worsening illness require urgent conventional medical attention. Call 995 in an emergency.

What makes a first consultation useful

The first visit does not need to produce a dramatic answer in a few minutes. A useful consultation should help you organise the problem: what you are experiencing, how long it has been happening, what has already been investigated, what medicines or supplements you use, and what you hope to improve. If a recommendation is made, you should understand what it is intended to support, what practical limits apply and when the plan should be reviewed.

Bring the information that prevents guesswork

A medicine list, allergy information, recent medical reports and a short timeline of symptoms can save time. For recurring problems, note what makes symptoms better or worse and whether sleep, meals, stress, movement or menstrual cycle changes are relevant. You do not need to stop conventional treatment before seeing a TCM practitioner; in fact, accurate information about current care makes the consultation safer.

Questions you are allowed to ask

Ask why a particular treatment is being suggested, whether there are alternatives, what sensations or side effects may occur, how many sessions should pass before reviewing progress, and whether anything should be discussed with your doctor or pharmacist. A responsible consultation should make room for questions rather than relying on authority alone.

Prepare a one-minute summary before you arrive

A useful first sentence is simple: what the main problem is, when it started, how often it happens and what you most want help with. Then add the information that changes decisions - major diagnoses, current medicines, allergies, pregnancy where relevant, recent procedures and important test results. This gives the practitioner a clear starting point without requiring you to remember every detail in perfect order.

Tongue and pulse are part of the TCM framework

Some TCM consultations include looking at the tongue and feeling the pulse at the wrist. These observations are interpreted within traditional diagnostic frameworks. They are not substitutes for blood tests, imaging, physical examination or a biomedical diagnosis when those are needed. If a traditional term sounds like the name of a modern organ disease, ask the practitioner to explain exactly what is meant.

A treatment plan should have a review point

Whether the recommendation is acupuncture, Tuina, Chinese medicine, lifestyle advice or a combination, ask how progress will be judged. A useful plan has a realistic review point rather than continuing indefinitely without reflection. Improvement might mean sleeping longer, walking farther, having fewer headache days or relying less on rescue medication - the goal should be concrete enough that both you and the practitioner can discuss whether the approach is worthwhile.

Tell the practitioner when something changes

New medicines, a new diagnosis, pregnancy, surgery, a fall, worsening symptoms or an unexpected reaction can change what is appropriate. Do not assume the information you gave months ago is still enough. Updating the practitioner is especially important when herbs, supplements or manual treatment are involved, because safety decisions depend on your current situation.

Leave with an explanation you can repeat

Before leaving, you should be able to explain in plain language what is being recommended, what it is intended to support, how often to use it, what normal reactions might occur, what warning signs matter and when to review. If you cannot explain the plan back to yourself, ask again. Clear communication is not a luxury; it is part of responsible care.

What a follow-up visit should clarify

A follow-up should not simply repeat the first appointment. It should compare what changed, what did not, whether any new symptoms appeared and whether the original goal still makes sense. If treatment has been tried, describe what happened between visits rather than only how you feel at that moment. This helps distinguish a temporary good day from a consistent trend and gives both sides a reason to continue, modify or stop a plan.

When it is reasonable to pause or seek another opinion

If you do not understand the explanation, feel pressured into a long package, are repeatedly told that worsening symptoms are always a good sign, or are discouraged from obtaining necessary medical assessment, it is reasonable to pause. A second opinion can be useful when the diagnosis is unclear, the recommended course is unusually long or expensive, or your condition is changing in a way that has not been adequately explained.

Practical consultation checklist

- What is the main concern, and when did it start?
- What clearly makes it better or worse?
- Which medicines, supplements or herbs are you taking?
- Are there allergies, pregnancy considerations or chronic conditions that matter?
- Which symptoms are new, severe, persistent or changing quickly?
- What is the single most useful outcome you want from this consultation?
- What would mean conventional medical review or emergency care should come first?

Contact Shande

For appointments and general enquiries, use WhatsApp or WeChat. Email is not presented as a routine customer-service channel.

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References & further reading

The chapters in this guide are drawn from the Shande Health Library. Key safety points are linked back to the public-health or professional sources cited in those articles.

General health education | Not a diagnosis | Emergency in Singapore: 995