



SHANDE TCM

Healthy Ageing, Balance & Safer Care

Strength, falls, dizziness, appetite, sleep and practical care decisions

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How to use this guide

This guide groups related everyday concerns so you can ask better questions, observe changes that actually matter and know when ordinary self-care may be reasonable versus when conventional medical assessment should come first. TCM terminology is kept in its traditional context rather than presented as biomedical diagnosis.

Safety principle

Severe, persistent, rapidly worsening symptoms or clear red flags should be medically assessed first. Call 995 for life-threatening emergencies.

CHAPTER 01

Healthy Ageing: Strength, Sleep, Appetite and Everyday Function

Healthy ageing is not about avoiding every symptom. It is about preserving function, confidence and independence while recognising problems early enough to act.



Key points

- Strength, balance, sleep, nutrition and medication review all matter.
- Unexplained weight loss, recurrent falls or new confusion deserve medical assessment.
- TCM should complement long-term disease management, not replace it.

Function is a useful measure

Can you walk comfortably, climb stairs, carry groceries, get up from a chair and manage daily tasks? Small declines in these abilities can matter more than a single wellness number. Regular activity and appropriate strength training help preserve muscle and balance.

Protect appetite and nutrition

Older adults may eat less because of dental issues, medicines, low mood, altered taste or illness. Unexplained weight loss is not something to celebrate automatically. Review meal quality, protein, hydration and whether swallowing or chewing has become difficult.

Sleep changes, but severe disruption is not inevitable

Sleep can become lighter with age, yet persistent insomnia, loud snoring, breathing pauses, restless legs, pain or frequent night urination may have treatable causes. Record the pattern before assuming poor sleep is simply part of ageing.

Where TCM may fit

Some older adults use acupuncture, Tuina or Chinese medicine for comfort or symptom support. Care should consider frailty, skin condition, blood thinners, osteoporosis, implanted devices, kidney or liver disease and the number of medicines already being taken.

Know the red flags

New confusion, sudden weakness, chest pain, severe breathlessness, a fall with possible head injury, repeated falls, unexplained weight loss or rapidly worsening function require medical evaluation.

CHAPTER 02

Falls and Balance in Older Adults: Prevention, Medication Review and Safer Support

A practical Singapore guide to falls, balance, footwear, home hazards, medicines and when dizziness or weakness needs medical review.

Key points

- A fall is not always “just old age”; vision, medicines, blood pressure, strength and neurological problems can contribute.
- Home hazards, unsuitable footwear and rushing can increase risk even when a person usually walks well.
- A new fall with head injury, weakness, severe pain, confusion or loss of consciousness needs prompt medical attention.

Start with what changed

Ask whether the person fell because they tripped, felt dizzy, blacked out, became weak, misjudged a step or could not recover balance. A useful description includes where it happened, footwear, lighting, recent illness and any new medicines.

Review medicines instead of blaming age

Blood-pressure medicines, sedatives, sleeping tablets and other medicines can sometimes contribute to dizziness or unsteadiness. Do not stop them yourself, but bring a complete medicine list to a doctor or pharmacist for review.

Strength and confidence both matter

Walking, leg strength and balance can decline when activity drops after a fall. Fear of falling may then lead to even less movement. A gradual, appropriate exercise plan can be important, particularly after medical causes of instability have been considered.

Make the home easier, not just safer

Look at loose rugs, clutter, wet floors, poor lighting, bathroom access and items stored too high or too low. The goal is not to remove independence; it is to make everyday movement more predictable and less risky.

Where TCM may fit

Some older adults use acupuncture or Tuina for pain or stiffness that affects movement. Treatment should be gentle, account for fragile skin, osteoporosis, medicines and medical conditions, and never substitute for evaluating unexplained dizziness, weakness or repeated falls.

Know when a fall is an emergency

Call 995 for life-threatening emergencies such as loss of consciousness, severe breathing problems, suspected stroke, major trauma or uncontrolled bleeding. Head injury, new weakness or numbness, severe pain or inability to bear weight also deserves prompt medical assessment.

CHAPTER 03

Dizziness and Light-Headedness: What to Observe Before Calling It “Weakness”

A safety-first guide to dizziness, hydration, medicines, blood pressure, balance symptoms and warning signs that need medical assessment.



Key points

- “Dizziness” can mean spinning, faintness, imbalance or visual instability; describing the feeling matters.
- Dehydration, medicines, blood pressure changes and many medical conditions can contribute.
- New neurological symptoms, chest pain, fainting or severe persistent dizziness need urgent medical assessment.

Use more precise words

Ask whether the room feels like it is spinning, whether you feel about to faint, whether you are simply unsteady, or whether vision seems to jump or blur. These descriptions point clinicians toward different possibilities.

Notice timing and triggers

Record whether symptoms happen when standing up, turning the head, getting out of bed, exercising, skipping meals, being in hot weather or after taking medicines. Also note vomiting, hearing changes, headache, weakness, palpitations and recent illness.

Hydration may matter, but it is not the whole answer

Singapore heat, diarrhoea, vomiting and poor fluid intake can contribute to dehydration. However, persistent dizziness should not automatically be treated with drinks or tonics without considering blood pressure, heart rhythm, inner-ear problems, anaemia, medicines and other causes.

TCM language should stay in its lane

A practitioner may describe a traditional pattern such as deficiency, phlegm-dampness or wind. Those terms should not be treated as proof of the biomedical cause. Important symptoms still deserve conventional assessment.

Sit down and reduce immediate risk

If you suddenly feel faint or unsteady, sit or lie down somewhere safe and avoid driving or climbing. If symptoms are recurrent, bring a medicine list and a clear timeline to a doctor or practitioner.

Know the urgent warning signs

Call 995 for life-threatening symptoms such as collapse, severe breathlessness or suspected stroke. New one-sided weakness, facial droop, speech difficulty, severe sudden headache, chest pain, fainting or inability to walk safely needs urgent medical attention.

CHAPTER 04

Balanced Meals in Singapore: A Practical Starting Point Before Food Therapy

How to use everyday Singapore meals, My Healthy Plate and TCM food traditions without turning eating into a complicated rulebook.

Key points

- Balance, variety and moderation are a stronger foundation than chasing a single “superfood”.
- My Healthy Plate offers a simple Singapore-specific visual guide.
- TCM food therapy can sit alongside balanced nutrition, not replace it.

Start with the plate, not the supplement shelf

HealthHub’s My Healthy Plate uses a simple quarter-quarter-half idea: roughly a quarter wholegrains, a quarter protein and half fruit and vegetables, with water as the usual drink. The exact meal can still look very Singaporean.

Apply the idea to familiar food

At a mixed-rice stall, choose a vegetable dish, a protein dish and a sensible staple portion. With noodles, add vegetables and a protein source rather than treating the noodles alone as a complete meal. With soup, remember that a light broth may still need enough protein and other food alongside it.

TCM food therapy is a tradition, not a replacement diet

TCM may describe foods using ideas such as warming, cooling or supporting particular patterns. Those traditional descriptions can guide culinary choices, but they do not replace nutritional needs or medical diets prescribed for conditions such as diabetes, kidney disease or food allergy.

Regularity can matter more than perfection

Long workdays can lead to skipped meals followed by very large late-night meals. A realistic goal may be more regular eating, enough vegetables, adequate protein and water, rather than an elaborate menu that cannot be sustained.

Use symptoms as feedback, not proof of a diagnosis

If particular meals repeatedly cause pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, swallowing problems, blood in stool or significant weight loss, seek medical assessment. Do not keep eliminating food groups indefinitely without understanding the reason.

CHAPTER 05

Travel, Jet Lag and Routine: A Practical Reset Guide

Travel can disturb sleep, bowel habits, appetite and energy. A few anchors - light, meal timing, movement and a sensible sleep plan - usually help more than a complicated detox routine.



Key points

- Use local light and wake time to reset the body clock.
- Avoid overusing alcohol or sedating products to force sleep.
- Persistent severe symptoms after travel may need medical review.

Reset with local time

After arrival, try to eat, move and sleep according to the destination schedule. Morning light can help when you need to shift earlier; evening light may help when shifting later. Short naps can be useful, but very long daytime sleep can prolong jet lag.

Keep meals predictable

Travel often means rich meals, irregular timing and less fibre. Aim for familiar foods when your stomach is unsettled, keep fluids steady and return to a normal meal rhythm rather than fasting or over-restricting to “reset”.

Movement helps

A walk after arrival supports circulation, daylight exposure and appetite. On long journeys, regular movement is also important for reducing stiffness. People with increased clot risk should follow medical travel advice.

TCM support

Some travellers use acupuncture or TCM consultation for sleep, digestive comfort or muscle tension. The goal should be symptom support, not a claim that jet lag can be cleared instantly.

Do not miss travel illness

Fever, severe diarrhoea, dehydration, rash with fever, breathing difficulty or symptoms after travel to areas with infectious-disease risks deserve medical assessment.

CHAPTER 06

TCM and Conventional Medical Care: Using Both Responsibly

A safety-first guide to communication between healthcare providers and situations that require urgent conventional medical attention.

Tell each provider what you are using

Good communication reduces avoidable risks. Tell your TCM practitioner about your medical diagnoses, prescriptions and hospital care, and tell your doctor or pharmacist about herbs, supplements and TCM products.

Do not stop prescribed treatment on your own

If you are considering changing a prescription medicine, discuss it with the clinician who prescribed it. Stopping some medicines suddenly can be dangerous.

Keep records

A simple list of medicines, supplements, allergies and recent tests makes it easier for different providers to understand your care.

Recognise emergencies

TCM clinics are not emergency departments. For severe or sudden symptoms, difficulty breathing, major bleeding, stroke-like symptoms or loss of consciousness, call 995 or seek urgent conventional care.

You do not have to choose one side

Many people use TCM while also seeing a GP, specialist, physiotherapist or other healthcare professional. The safest approach is transparency. Tell each provider what medicines, herbs, supplements and treatments you are using. This allows interactions, duplicated treatment and conflicting advice to be considered rather than hidden.

Different systems answer different questions

A TCM pattern description and a biomedical diagnosis are not interchangeable. One may be used to organise treatment within the TCM framework, while the other may rely on examination, imaging, laboratory tests or established diagnostic criteria. Keeping those roles clear reduces confusion and prevents traditional terminology from being mistaken for proof of organ disease.

Urgent care is not a competition

Chest pain, severe breathing difficulty, stroke-like symptoms, major trauma, uncontrolled bleeding, loss of consciousness and other emergencies need immediate conventional medical care. Complementary treatment can be reconsidered after urgent problems are stabilised. Responsible TCM should never require delaying emergency assessment.

Give both sides the same medication list

One of the simplest safety habits is to keep a current list of prescription medicines, non-prescription products, vitamins, supplements and Chinese medicines. Show the same list to your doctor and TCM practitioner when relevant. This reduces the chance that each provider is working with only half the information.

Test results do not lose importance because you use TCM

Blood tests, imaging and specialist diagnoses can answer questions that traditional pattern assessment cannot. If a doctor has identified diabetes, anaemia, a fracture, infection or another condition, do not replace that information with a TCM label. Traditional care may still be discussed as complementary support, but the established diagnosis remains important for safety and planning.

Chronic disease needs coordination, not secrecy

People with high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney or liver disease, cancer, heart disease and other chronic conditions may still be interested in TCM. The safest approach is coordinated disclosure. Some herbs, supplements or changes in diet may affect medicines or laboratory results, so your treating medical team should know what you are using.

Do not stop prescribed medicine because of a broad promise

Be cautious if anyone tells you to stop essential medicine immediately because a complementary treatment can “replace” it, especially without speaking to the prescriber. Changes to long-term medication often need monitoring and should be made with the healthcare professional responsible for that treatment.

The best integration is practical

Integrated care does not require both systems to agree on every theory. It requires each to stay within its strengths, communicate clearly and avoid delaying necessary care. A patient should be able to use TCM for appropriate goals while still receiving vaccinations, screening, emergency care, surgery, medicines or rehabilitation when those are needed.

Preventive care still matters

Using TCM does not remove the value of vaccination, cancer screening, blood pressure checks, diabetes monitoring, dental care or other preventive services appropriate for your age and risk. Complementary care works best when it sits beside, rather than replaces, routine prevention and evidence-based follow-up for known conditions.

Transitions are the moments to communicate again

Hospital discharge, surgery, a new specialist, pregnancy, a new diagnosis or a major medicine change are good times to update every practitioner involved. Information that was safe six months ago may no longer be enough. Repeating your current medicine and supplement list during these transitions can prevent avoidable misunderstandings.

Practical checklist

Is the problem getting worse or clearly affecting daily function?

Are there breathing, consciousness, bleeding, dehydration or neurological red flags that should come first?

What prescription medicines, over-the-counter products, supplements or TCM products are already being used?

If an approach is tried, when will progress be reviewed?

What change would mean self-care should stop and professional assessment should come first?

References & further reading

Health Sciences Authority (HSA): Chinese proprietary medicines and complementary health product safety. Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF): Emergency Medical Services and guidance on when to call 995.