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Skin, Lifestyle & Healthy Ageing

Skin comfort, daily habits, strength, sleep and ageing well

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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

Looking and feeling well are not separate from health. Skin symptoms, sleep, strength, appetite, activity and chronic conditions all deserve context. This guide focuses on practical habits, appropriate medical review and the role TCM can play without turning normal ageing or persistent skin problems into vague “detox” claims.

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

Skin Health: TCM, Lifestyle and Conventional Care Can Coexist



A realistic guide to acne, eczema-like symptoms, irritation and cosmetic concerns without treating every skin problem as “heat” or “toxins”.

Key points

- Skin conditions can look similar but have different causes.
- Avoid strong claims about “detoxing” or curing chronic skin disease.
- Painful infection, rapidly spreading rash or severe allergic symptoms need medical care.

Skin health comes before appearance

Acne, eczema, irritation, fungal infection, allergic reactions and other conditions can overlap in appearance. Before focusing on brightening, glow or beauty goals, make sure an ongoing medical skin problem is not being missed.

TCM language is not a laboratory test

A practitioner may use terms such as heat, dampness or blood-related patterns to describe a traditional pattern. These concepts should not be presented as proof of toxins in the blood or as a biomedical explanation for every rash.

Lifestyle support can be simple

Gentle cleansing, avoiding known irritants, sleep, stress management and not picking inflamed skin can help support many routines. Overly aggressive scrubs, frequent product changes and multiple herbal creams may make it harder to identify what is causing irritation.

Tell both sides what you are using

If you use prescription creams, oral medicines, supplements or TCM products, keep both your doctor and TCM practitioner informed. Some topical products sold as “herbal” have been found to contain undeclared potent medicines, so reputable sourcing matters.

Get medical help for warning signs

Seek prompt care for rapidly spreading redness, severe pain, fever, facial swelling, difficulty breathing, blistering over large areas, eye involvement or signs of serious infection. Persistent or worsening skin problems also deserve proper diagnosis.

Treat skin as health before appearance

Take note of when the problem started, products being used, itch or pain, sleep, stress, medicines and whether there are signs of infection. Ask what can realistically improve, how long a trial should be, what would require dermatology or medical review, and whether any topical or herbal product has safety considerations.

Photographs can be useful when used carefully

Skin can look different from day to day. A photograph taken in similar lighting every few days can help show whether redness, swelling or distribution is actually changing. Also note new products, medicines and environmental exposures. Do not rely on photographs alone for diagnosis; painful, infected, rapidly spreading or otherwise concerning skin problems should be assessed in person.

CHAPTER 02

Sensitive Skin and Itch: Triggers, Habits and Red Flags

Itch can come from dry skin, eczema, allergy, infection, medicines or many other causes. The useful starting point is to protect the skin barrier and notice patterns.

Key points

- New facial swelling, breathing difficulty or a rapidly spreading severe rash need urgent care.
- Change one skincare product at a time when investigating irritation.
- TCM discussions should not delay review of persistent or unusual rashes.

Protect the skin barrier

Use gentle cleansing, avoid very hot showers and moisturise soon after bathing if dryness is a problem. Fragrance, strong acids and multiple active products can worsen irritation. When skin is already inflamed, simpler routines are often easier to tolerate.

Track exposures

New cosmetics, laundry products, jewellery, workplace chemicals, sweating, travel, pets and medicines can all change skin symptoms. Take clear photos during flares and note what changed in the days before.

Singapore heat and sweat

Heat and sweating can aggravate eczema, heat rash and friction. Breathable clothing, changing out of wet clothes and cooling the skin can reduce irritation. Persistent infected-looking areas, pus or fever need medical assessment.

Where TCM may fit

TCM may discuss skin symptoms alongside sleep, digestion, stress and traditional pattern concepts. Any internal herbal product should be considered an active exposure and disclosed with prescriptions, supplements, pregnancy and allergies.

Red flags

Seek urgent help for breathing difficulty, swelling of the lips or tongue, faintness or a severe rapidly spreading allergic reaction. See a doctor for persistent rash, signs of infection,

significant pain, fever or blistering.

CHAPTER 03

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 04

Stress and Sleep: A TCM Perspective Without the Mystique

Stress and poor sleep often reinforce each other. See how TCM pattern thinking can sit alongside practical sleep habits and conventional care.

Key points

- Stress can affect sleep, and poor sleep can make stress feel harder to manage.
- TCM pattern language is descriptive, not a replacement for mental-health or sleep diagnoses.
- Start with routines, workload, caffeine, exercise and the sleep environment.

Why stress and sleep travel together

When the mind remains alert after a demanding day, falling asleep can take longer and sleep may become lighter or more fragmented. Poor sleep then affects concentration, patience and resilience the next day. This creates a cycle that can feel bigger than either problem on its own.

Where TCM fits

A TCM practitioner may describe combinations of restlessness, digestive changes, headaches, palpitations, temperature sensations or fatigue using traditional pattern terms. These terms help guide TCM treatment choices, but they do not replace assessment for anxiety disorders, depression, insomnia, thyroid problems, sleep apnoea or other medical causes.

Make the evening less “busy”

A useful target is not a perfect wellness routine but a calmer final hour. Reduce work messages, bright screens and heavy meals where practical. Some people benefit from a short walk, warm shower, light stretching, breathing exercises or reading. Choose something repeatable rather than an elaborate ritual you will abandon after three nights.

What to tell your practitioner

Mention how long the problem has lasted, whether it began after a life event, how much caffeine and alcohol you use, your work schedule and any medicines or supplements. Tell the practitioner if you are already seeing a doctor or mental-health professional. TCM should be coordinated with—not hidden from—other care.

Get additional help when needed

Seek medical advice when sleep problems persist, when anxiety or low mood is difficult to manage, or when daytime functioning is significantly affected. Thoughts of self-harm or inability to stay safe require urgent professional help rather than a wellness article or routine TCM appointment.

Make the next conversation more useful

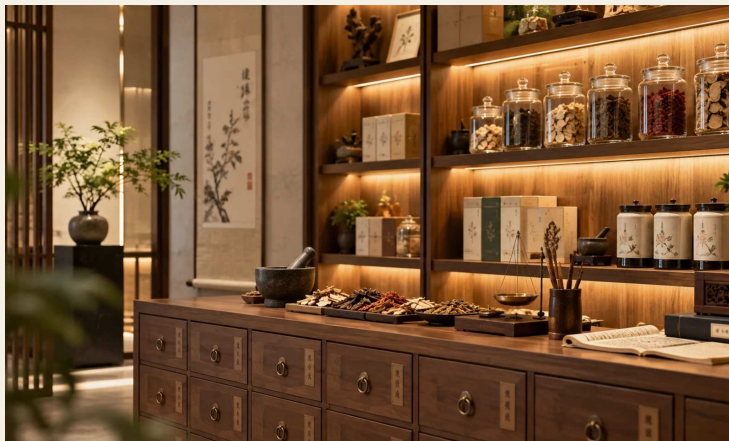
Before your appointment, note the timing and frequency of the problem, sleep and waking times, caffeine and alcohol, medicines, stressors and any symptoms such as snoring, breathlessness, pain or reflux. Useful questions include: What ordinary causes should I rule out? Which changes are worth trying 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 05

Heat and Humidity in Singapore: Everyday Wellness Without Overcomplicating It



Singapore's heat and humidity affect sleep, exercise, appetite, skin comfort and hydration. The useful response is usually simple: pace activity, replace fluids and recognise danger signs.

Key points

- Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are medical issues, not TCM “heatiness”.
- Hydration needs vary with activity, sweating and health conditions.
- TCM lifestyle advice should sit alongside basic heat-safety measures.

Start with exposure

Outdoor work, long commutes, exercise, crowded events and poorly ventilated rooms can all increase heat load. Plan heavier activity for cooler times where possible, take shaded breaks and change out of sweat-soaked clothing if skin irritation becomes a problem.

Hydration is not one fixed number

People who sweat heavily, exercise or spend long periods outdoors may need more fluid. Some also need electrolytes during prolonged heavy sweating. People with heart, kidney or other conditions may have individual fluid advice.

Sleep in a humid climate

Cooling the bedroom can improve comfort, but very cold air-conditioning may dry the throat or worsen nasal symptoms in some people. Aim for a comfortable environment rather than a dramatic temperature change.

TCM language and practical habits

TCM may describe some symptoms using terms related to heat, dampness or constitution. These are traditional concepts and should not be confused with heat exhaustion, dehydration or infection.

Know the danger signs

Confusion, fainting, very high body temperature, severe weakness, inability to keep fluids down or collapse can indicate serious heat illness. Seek urgent medical help rather than relying on drinks, herbs or home remedies alone.

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

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 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.

WhatsApp: +65 8171 6002 | Fortune Centre, 190 Middle Road, Singapore 188979

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