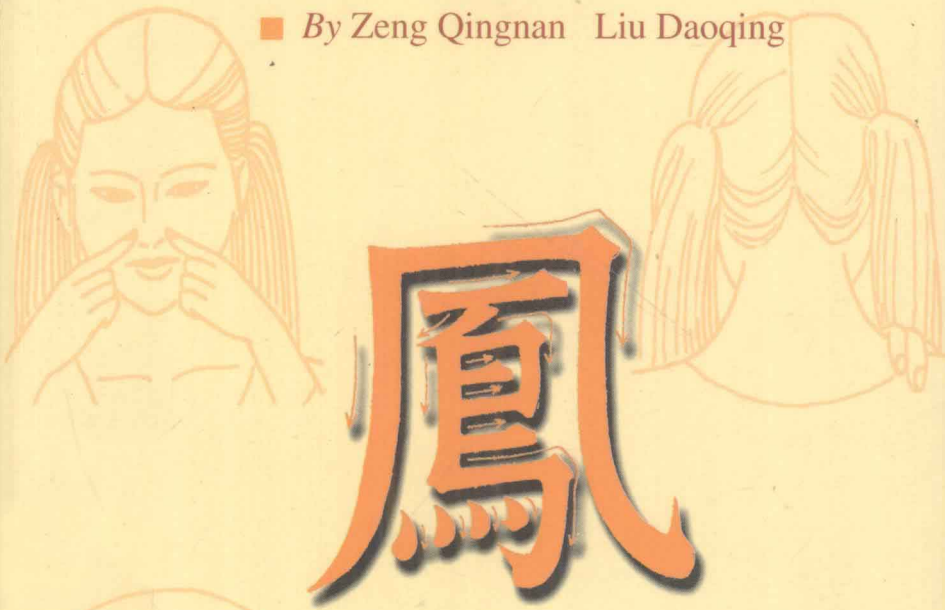
China's Traditional Way of Health Preservation

By Zeng Qingnan Liu Daoqing



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Zeng Qingnan
Liu Daoqing

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Home Page:
http://www.flp.com.cn
E-mail Addresses:
info@flp.com.cn
sales@flp.com.cn

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曾庆南　刘道清　编著

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Introduction

Human Life Expectancy

All living things have a fairly fixed life expectancy. For example, a cat can live as long as 10 years, a dog 18 years, an ox 30 years, a horse 40 years, an elephant 150 years, a turtle 300 years and a whale 400 years. Then how long can a man live? Scientists have made a long and deep study of this question and found the following methods of calculation which conform to the law of life expectancy of man and animals: The life expectancy of mammals should be five to seven times their growth period. The human growth period is about 20-25 years. Calculated on this basis, the life expectancy limit of man should be 100 to 175 years. Wu Keqian, a Chinese physician during the Qing Dynasty(1644-1911), wrote in his book *Instructions on Health Building · Preface*: "From the time he is born, a man grows fully (matures) by the age of 25. In proportion to the length of the life of animals, man should live as long as 125 years or 200 years."

Calculating by the sexual maturity period, scientists have pointed out that the highest life expectancy for mammals is generally 8-10 times their sexual maturity period. The human sexual maturity period is generally 14-15 years. Calculated on this basis, the highest life expectancy of man should be 112 to 150 years.

Calculating by the number of times that cells divide, an American cytologist made a study of the law of the division and proliferation of cells of human embryo fibers and proposed methods for

calculating human life expectancy based on the number of times that cells divide. The pulmonary fiber cells of the chicken are divided 13-35 times and its life expectancy is 30 years. The pulmonary fiber cells of the sea turtle are divided 72-114 times and its life expectancy is 300 years. The average cycle of the division of the pulmonary fiber cells of all animals is 2.4 years. The pulmonary fiber cells of human beings divide about 50 times. Calculated on this basis, the highest life expectancy limit for human beings should be 120 years.

Calculating by pregnancy, Ermonsky, a Soviet biologist, said there is a variation coefficient of embryo development and life expectancy of human beings, and it is 15.15. The human gestation period is 266 days. When this figure is multiplied by 15.15, it equals 11 years. If it is multiplied by 15.15 again, it should be 167 years. This is the highest limit of life expectancy for human beings.

Calculating by the viability of organs and tissues, experiments have proved that human organs and tissues can live many years outside the human body. If calculated on this basis, the tissues and organs of human beings can work for 140-150 years. It can thus be seen that the highest limit of human life expectancy can be 150 years.

Calculated on the basis of these theories, the top limit of human life expectancy should be over 100 years. Some people argue that it should be 120 years, some believe that it should be 150 years, some 180 years and some 200 years. Suharevsky of the former Soviet Union even argued that it should be 400 years.

In fact, there were people who lived to that age and longer. There are many records of this in ancient China. *The Incidents in the Reign of Kaiyuan* (713-742) in the Tang Dynasty says: "Yu Bolong in Taiyuan was still full of vigor when at the age of 128. His son had died, but his two grandsons of 70 and 80 years old lived with him. The book *The Annals of Dong Wei* says: "Yang Xiaju is

81 years old, but his uncles are all over 120 years of age. We also saw his grandfather, he called himself Mr. Song, and he is 195 years old." The book the *Collection of Bibliographical Sketches of Incidents* records: "In Nanyang is the Ju River, and its water is sweet and fragrant. More than 10 families have drunk the water and all have lived a long life, some to the age of 120-130 years. *History of the Zhou Dynasty* records: "In the family of Wang Renyu in the Five Dynasties, a grandmother lived more than 200 years." It is also recorded in the literature that Peng Zu lived 800 years, Lao Zi 160 years, Huang Di (Yellow Emperor) 110 years, Emperor Yao 118 years, Emperor Shun 110 years, Hui Zhao, a high-ranking monk in the Five Dynasties, 290 years, Sun Simiao, a famous physician in the Tang Dynasty, 101 years, Zhen Quan 103 years, Li Zhishuang 136 years, Sun Jianlong in Yaojiang 159 years and Liang Lanxiang in Guangxi 142 years, both in the Qing Dynasty.... There were too many people with a long life recorded in the ancient literature to be all mentioned here.

There are also many with a long life recorded in modern literature. Many of them have been reported in the press, but we are not going to mention them again in this book.

With life improving day by day and more and more health protection measures taken, we believe that more and more people over the age of 100 years will appear.

Causes of aging and declining

"Birth, growth, adulthood, old age and death" form the whole process of human life. But why does a man get old and weak? To get a clear answer to this question is helpful to delay becoming old and weak so as to prolong life.

There are many factors. Generally, these are the following:

Genetics. Most scholars hold that life-span is a characteristic of the species, mainly determined by hereditary factors. For example, the life-span of the mouse is 5 years at most, rabbit 15 years, dog 18 years, pig 20 years and horse 40 years. The life-spans of the elephant, turtle and whale have already been mentioned. The differences in their life-spans are due to the different characteristics of their species, or their different hereditary factors. This is also true for human beings. Different hereditary genes result in different life-spans. Generally, if the parents have a long life, their children will also have a long life.

According to one survey, 21-71 percent of old people in the world have a family history of longgevity. It is 50 percent in Shenyang, 60 percent in the Bama Yao Autonomous County in Guangxi, and 65 percent in Guangzhou. Moreover, there are families whose members have had long lives for generations. For example, in the family history of 45 very old people in Changsha, people of three generations with a long life accounted for 31 percent, and the people with a long life accounted for 51 percent of the members of these families.

Why? Because the hereditary genes determine the differences between individuals. These genes are in the deoxyribonucleic acids (DNA) in the cell nucleus, and the DNA is an component part of the chromosomes. When a cell divides, the chromosome is divided into two, and the DNA copies itself and reproduces another DNA. The two identical DNA stay separately in the two newly split chromosomes, and then live within the new-born cells. The genes that determine the different properties occupy only a small part of the DNA molecule. They control the growth, splitting, and metabolism of the cells through a control channel called the information transmission system. Some scholars hold that the genes which determine the same characteristic occupy not only one small part, but

several small parts, of the DNA. In other words, there are repetitions of these genes. The genes of species with long-life elements in their DNA molecules also have more gene reserves. As one ages, the DNA molecules are constantly damaged and the reserve genes are constantly used. When the reserve genes are completely consumed, old age comes. Other scholars hold that with increased age, more and more errors are made in the information transmission system, thus reducing the function of the cells and leading to old age. Still other scholars hold that there are "old age genes," and they are activated at a certain period of life, bringing about retrogressive changes in the organism. And the accumulation of these retrogressive changes leads to old age. How do the hereditary genes control old age? There is still no final answer at present. A definite conclusion will be made only after more research.

The theory of endocrinopathy. The endocrine system includes the sexual gland, the thoracic gland, the pituitary gland, the thyroid gland and the adrenal gland. The hormones they secrete are closely related to the growth, development and physiological functions of the human body. Therefore, these hormones can accelerate or delay the aging process. After middle age, the functions of the endocrine glands become gradually weak, leading to the gradual decline of their physiological function and therefore to old age.

The theory of immunity. Immunity is a physiological function of the human body. Depending on this function, the organism distinguishes itself from alien elements, and excludes and destroys the antigens (such as virus, bacteria and tumor cells) that have invaded the organism, or the isomeric substances (such as dead and damaged cells) produced by the organism itself. Immunity protects the human body by resisting bacterial infection, but on the other hand, it can be detrimental in such cases as allergy, autoimmunity and transplantation immunity. For example, when a patient with extensive

burns needs skin grafting, apart from grafting the healthy skin from his own body, the skin from others is also used. However, the grafted skin is vulnerable to necrosis. This is exactly the immune function of excluding alien elements. The immunity of the human body originates with the lymphocytes. Lymphocytes are divided into two categories: One category originates from the B cells in the marrow, and the other from the T cells in the thoracic glands. The lymphocytes can identify and destroy the alien elements such as bacteria, viruses, fungus, cancer cells and poisonous substances, thus protecting the organism. After middle age, the thoracic gland declines (it is 40 grams in puberty, and is reduced to 10 grams by old age), the reproduction of the T cells slows down, and the quantity decreases. The normal immunity of the B cells also becomes weak, thus increasing the incidence of malignant tumors and other diseases of old age. At the same time, the lymphocytes in middle-aged and old people seem to lose some of their identifying ability. They then fail to distinguish the invading cells from the body's own cells, with the result that their own cells are also destroyed. This is called "autoimmunity." The increase of the reaction of "autoimmunity" leads to the increase of the diseases of autoimmunity such as rheumatoid arthritis, thus accelerating the aging process.

The theory of the central nervous system. Under normal conditions, from the time a man is born until the age of 50, the weight of his cerebrum increases gradually. This increase in the weight of the cerebrum is fastest between ages 6 and 10. It becomes obviously slower between ages 21 and 30, and declines after 60. As the cerebrum cortex maintains the normal functions of the human body through the central nerve and its surrounding nervous system, whether the central nerve cells decline or not plays an extremely important role in the aging process. Experiments have shown that the tension of the cerebrum cortex and the imbalance of the internal and exter-

nal surroundings of the human body weaken the functions of the internal organs in the whole body. The more developed the cerebrum, the longer the life span. The decline of the cerebrum gives rise to the early aging.

The theory of autointoxication. As the function of the excretory organs declines, the products of metabolism, such as phenol, indole and pigments, are apt to deposit in and intoxicate the cells. If more and more of these poisonous substances are deposited in the cells and the cells beome intoxicated, they decline and eventually die. As a result, the internal organs and the human body become old and weak.

The knowledge of the cause of old age in traditional Chinese medicine. Traditional Chinese medicine attributes life-span and health to the function of the kidneys. The kidneys are "the foundation of the innate" and the "chief commander." They command reproduction and thinking. The functions of the kidneys include some of the functions of the reproductive system, the endocrine system, the central nervous system, and the immunity system. A man with the strong sap of the kidneys is not only full of vigor and quick-minded, he also enjoys good health and has a longer life. This ancient knowledge also holds that aging is closely related to the living environment and habits. For example, *The Yellow Emperor's Canon of Medicine,* holds that people living in cold and high mountainous regions have a longer life, while those living in damp, hot, and low-lying regions have a shorter life. It also says: "People in remote ages followed the law of Yin and Yang, were reconciled to magical calculations and fortune-telling, controlled their diets, and lived a regulated life. They did not overwork themselves, so they had sound bodies and minds and lived to the age of 100. The people of today do the opposite. They drink wine like water, often wildly, and have sex when they are drunk in order to exhaust their energy and consume their vitality.

They do not know how to feel satisfied or protect their energy, but only seek sensuous pleasures. Since they ignore the laws for proper living and live without restraint, they may die at 50." This passage deals with the relationship between the aging process and living habits. It means that as long as you are moderate in eating and drinking, have a regular life and do not overwork yourself, you will enjoy good health and have a long life. Otherwise, you may become old and weak by the age of 50.