

College of Unani Tibb and Alternative Medicine

Module 9 part 1: Effects of movement and rest sleep and wakefulness and psychological movements

What this module covers:

Effects of:

- movement and rest on the body
- sleep and wakefulness
- psychological movements

Effects of movement and rest

Every type of exercise will increase the innate heat. The effect of movement on the body depends on the amount of movement or exercise, its intensity, and the rest taken afterward. Also how much of a movement has the exercise caused to the humours.

Movement

There are two types of movement: **Voluntary** and **Involuntary**.

Voluntary movement such as the movement of the hand, legs, and head is within our control.

Movement of for example the heart, lungs and stomach are involuntary and are not in our control.

Normally an increase in movement results in an increase of **heat**. Initially the heat is associated with moisture. As movement increases and subsequent increase of heat, there is a decrease in moistness and an increase in dryness.

Ibn Sina says:

“...movements, whether vigorous, or prolonged or short, or accompanied by rest, **act together in stirring heat**. But the short vigorous movement differs from the prolonged non-vigorous movement and from the prolonged movement accompanied by rest. It is because the **short vigorous movement makes the body very hot and causes less dispersion** if at all, whereas the **prolonged movement** in spite of its mildness **produces greater dispersion** than warming. When **any** of the short vigorous **movement** or prolonged non-vigorous movement is **excessive it produces cold because it excessively disperses the innate heat..”**

The presence of some additional factors may hinder or enhance the effect of activity.

Thus Ibn Sina says:

“...For instance, if it is the movement involved in waterman’s occupation, it is liable to produce cold and moisture, and if it is the movement involved in blacksmith's art, it is liable to produce more heat and dryness. “

Rest

Chisti says:

Rest always has a cooling effect, thus retaining the humours and interfering with the elimination of waste matters.

Sexual intercourse always cools the body, although the net effect may be increase of heat due to physical exertion.

Rest **produces moisture** and has a cooling effect. It is cooling because there is no excitation of heat and there is an inward collection and accumulation of matter, suppressing any heat. It is moistening due to slowing of the disposal of wastes.

Ibn Sina says:

“...rest, it is always cooling because there is no excitation of heat and there is congestion which soothes the heat. Moreover, rest is moistening because there is no dispersion of the superfluities.”

Effects of Sleep and Wakefulness

Sleep

Sleep has similar effects as rest. It strengthens all natural functions; makes the breath unclear, restrains strong evacuation, helps digestion, helps expel matter that has lost its vitality, induces sweating, and usually disperses the innate heat.

It is a principle of nature that for humans, night is the time of sleep and day the time of action. It is ideal to retire shortly after night has fully fallen (about one hour after sunset) and arise about one hour before sunrise.

The states of sleep and rest have share many common characteristics. Likewise the state wakefulness and movement have certain similarities.

Sleep directs the innate heat inwards and strengthens the physical faculties. However sleep weakens the nervous faculty by relaxing and moistening its components; and by making the vital force dense by reducing evaporation.

Sleep removes the causes of fatigue and stops excessive excretions promoted by activity.

Sleep helps to remove waste matter which is around the in the skin by containing innate heat to the interior and by moving nutriment to the body including the periphery where it pushes out the wastes by pressing from behind. But the state of wakefulness is more effective in waste disposal.

Sleep causes more perspiration than wakefulness due to the dominance of the digestive physical faculty but it lacks the steady excretion of wastes normally carried out during wakefulness.

If a person sweats excessively during sleep without other causes, then this is due to excess of food intolerable food.

During sleep, the digestion and maturation of food is starts to become blood humour and sent throughout the body, which results in innate heat spreading through the body.

During sleep if there is access hot bilious humours for an access period then this will result in the body having an abnormal type of heat.

Sleeping on an empty stomach produces cold from the dispersion. Also food that is indigestible produces cold.

Wakefulness

The waking state has the opposite of all of these effects. Excessive sleep draws the innate heat within the body, causing the exterior to become cold.

However remaining awake for long periods of time corrupts the temperament of brain by producing dryness and weakens it. This induces confusion, burns up the humours and causes acute type of mental disorders.



But then too much sleep produces dullness of the psychic faculties, heaviness of head and cold diseases. This is because excessive sleep prevents dispersion.

Wakefulness stimulates the appetite by dispersing the wastes. It however, weakens digestion by dissipating the strength of faculties.

Sleep, which is restless and disturbed, is harmful. The main characteristics of sleep are that innate heat moves inwards while cold dominates in the exterior of the body.

References

Ibn Sina's Canon of Medicine (10th century).

Abu-Asab, M., Amri, H. and Micozzi, M. (2013) *Avicenna's medicine: A new translation of the 11th-century canon with practical applications for integrative health care*, Rochester, VT: Healing Arts Press.

Further reading and online resources

Ibn Sina's Canon of Medicine (10th century).