

# Prevention of Disease

Unani Medicine recognizes the influence of surroundings and ecological conditions on the state of health of human beings. The most basic principle in promotion of health and prevention of disease is temperament (*Mizāj*). The Classics of the Unani System of Medicine clearly lay down that maintenance of Health (*Ḥifẓān-i Ṣiḥḥat*) is superior to treatment. In disease, treatment is done by using the non-drug (diet) and drug factors of opposite temperament, while for maintenance of health, mostly non-drug factors of the same temperament are used. For maintenance of health, Unani Medicine specially places emphasis on the Six Essential Factors (*Asbāb Sitta Ḍarūriyya*), i.e., Air (*Hawā'*), Food and Drink (*Ma'kūl-o-Mashrūb*), Bodily Movement and Repose (*Ḥarakat-o-Sukūn Badanī*), Psychic Movement and Repose (*Ḥarakat-o-Sukūn Nafsānī*), Sleep and Wakefulness (*Nawm-o-Yaqza*) and Evacuation and Retention (*Istifrāgh-o-Iḥtibās*). The lifestyle disorders like Depression, Hypertension, Coronary Heart Disease, Obesity etc., which are the major health burden of present times, can be successfully, economically and safely prevented by following the instructions with regard to these essential factors. In fact, Unani System of Medicine describes all the Factors affecting health and disease, of whom those affecting all human beings perpetually are called Essential (*Ḍarūriyya*), while, the rest are called Non-Essential (*Ghayr Ḍarūriyya*).

## Air (*Hawā'*)

Air is the most crucial factor for life. It helps in the production and maintenance of pneuma, which is the source of vitality. Air is the medium of most of the external factors affecting life and health. Unani System of Medicine uses air in prevention and treatment chiefly by taking into account the seasonal variations in Air. For instance, in summer, air becomes hotter, so cold food and moderate movement and exercise should be adopted to remain healthy.

### Food and Drink (*Ma'kūl-o-Mashrūb*)

Food is second only to air in maintaining life and health by replacing the body's used-up and broken-down components (*Badal mā Yataḥallal*). Unani System of Medicine makes extensive use of diet both for promotion of health and treatment of disease. It has been very successful in identifying appropriate food by using the principle of temperament. Similarly, drinks especially water is crucial since food becomes effective in solution. Therefore, Unani System of Medicine provides extensive guidelines for the type of water and the appropriate time for drinking it.

### Bodily Movement and Repose (*Ḥarakat-o-Sukūn Badanī*)

Unani System of Medicine gives great importance to both appropriate movement and rest for maintaining health and curing disease. Movement is necessary for evacuating waste products, and rest is needed for retaining nutrients till the completion of digestion.

### Psychic Movement and Repose (*Ḥarakat-o-Sukūn Nafsānī*)

Unani System of Medicine recognizes the role of psychic states in maintaining health and preventing disease and describes mental states in terms of the movement and repose of pneuma. Unani Medicine considers the heart as a seat of pneuma (*Rūḥ*) and the soul (*Nafs*), while brain as the seat of psychic faculties (*Quwā Nafsāniyya*). So, mental states described by Unani Medicine in terms of psychic movement and repose specially affect heart and brain function.

### Sleep and Wakefulness (*Nawm-o-Yaqza*)

Sleep is necessary for preserving pneuma and vitality and providing replacement of wear and tear, while wakefulness is necessary for voluntary functions. Therefore, moderation should be exercised with regard to sleep and wakefulness.

### Evacuation and Retention (*Istifrāgh-o-Iḥtibās*)

Evacuation is needed for removal of waste products which may cause obstructions or embolism and toxicity. Evacuation takes place by defecation, micturition, sweating, etc. Retention of nutrients is needed for health and prevention of the diseases.

## Principles of Treatment in Unani Medicine

In Unani System of Medicine, following basic principles are used in the management of diseases depending upon the pathology involved in the disease process:

1. **Removal of the causative factor (*Izāla-i Sabab*):** The causative factors in the pathology of the disease process are determined and removed for the proper management of the disease.
2. **Normalization of the morbid temperament (*Ta'dīl-i Mizāj*):** The disease in which the temperament of a person is altered without affecting the quality and quantity of humours, only correction of simple morbid temperament is required. This is achieved simply by modifying the lifestyle of the patient in the light of description of the essential and non-essential factors in the literature of Unani System of Medicine.
3. **Evacuation of morbid material (*Tanqīya*):** The temperament is changed due to increase in the quantity of certain humours and that morbid material in the body gets accumulated. The morbid material of the body is evacuated by various therapies through different routes for the treatment of the disease e.g. Cupping (*Hijāma*), Venesection (*Faşd*), Leeching (*Ta'līq*), Concoctive (*Munzij*) Purgative (*Mushil*) Therapy, Expectoration (*Tanfīs*), Diuresis (*Idrār-i Bawl*) and Diaphoresis (*Ta'rīq*).
4. **Heterotherapy (*'Ilāj bi'l-Didd*):** This is the main principle of treatment in Unani System of Medicine in which the drug having temperament opposite to the disease is administered for the correction of morbid temperament and cure of illness.
5. **Holistic approach:** In the management of the systemic diseases, the entire lifestyle and the constitution of the patient is taken into account for making diagnosis and prescribing correct treatment. It includes habits, habitat, physical, emotional, temperamental and humoral status of the patient and condition of system/organ of the body involved. Taking all these factors into account, the treatment of the disease is prescribed.
6. **Surgical and para-surgical procedures (*'Ilāj bi'l-Yad*):** In Unani System of Medicine, diseases of the structure (*Sū'-i Tarkīb*) and breach of continuity (*Tafarruq-i Ittişāl*) are treated by using suitable operative and para operative techniques as applied for the treatment by the Unani scholars.



7. **Psychiatric treatment (*'Ilāj Nafsānī*):** Unani System of Medicine treats psychiatric diseases and psychic element of psycho-somatic diseases by using drugs, modifying mind-related processes like sleep and psychotherapy. It is able to use drugs by its discovery of the 'substance of mind' i.e. psychic pneuma (*Rūḥ Nafsānī*) while its appreciation of the medical importance of processes, physical conditions, etc., which it organizes as 'Six Essential Factors' (*Asbāb Sitta Darūriyya*), helps it closely relate sleep, etc. to the improvement of psychiatric and psycho-somatic diseases. It also makes use of psychotherapy by manipulation of mind by verbal means. But its main reliance is on drug treatment as it has discovered the subtle substance of mind and its relation with drugs due to their common temperament.
8. **Spiritual treatment (*'Ilāj Rūḥānī*):** Unani System of Medicine recognises the role of spiritual health and treatment by discovering that the spirit (*Nafs Nāṭiqā*) is joined to the pneuma and through it, to the body, and is the supreme regulator of man. However, Unani System of Medicine restricts itself to the pneuma and body, and leaves spiritual treatment to religious and spiritual counselling by spiritual authorities. Although, it does not oblige the physician to be a spiritual authority but culturally most physicians are also spiritually advanced and provide spiritual counselling which has a powerful role in healthcare by facilitating a healthy lifestyle and de-stressing. The technical limitations of medicine to only pneuma and body allows people of all religious persuasions to practice Unani System of Medicine, while recognition of religious and spiritual counselling as a complementary activity permits spiritual dimension of health-care.
9. **Three primary sources of drugs (*Mawālīd Thalātha*):** In Unani System of Medicine, drug substances are obtained from herbal, animal and mineral sources for the medication purposes in their natural form. Sometimes, these drugs are used in simple form and sometimes in the form of a compound of various drugs. They may be subjected to physico-chemical processes but without breaking up their natural character. Thus, Unani System of Medicine uses only natural substances in treatment.