

# **The Medicine of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)**

## **Introduction**

The Medicine of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is a neglected yet very important aspect of our religion. The early Muslims gave this topic area much thought and investigation, and as a result they advanced in medicine infinitely more than other civilisations at the time. The likes of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam al-Tirmidhi included separate chapters on *Kitab al-Tibb* (the book of medicine) in their revered compilations of hadith. Implicitly this indicates that in the same way it is important to learn how to do Wudu, perform Salah and Hajj from the Messenger, importance should also be attached to taking our medicine from him too.

## **1. The Importance of good health in Islam**

Good health is considered one of the greatest gifts of Allah. It is impossible to fulfill the rights of Allah and His creations in the absence of good health. This is the reason why there are so many Shari'ah rulings that are suspended for the ill. Fasting in Ramadan and attending *jum'a* prayers are just two examples. There are many other ahadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that stress the importance and value of good health. Here are just a handful:

a. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

There are two gifts of which many men are cheated – good health and free time (*Sahih al-Bukhari*)<sup>1</sup>

b. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

Whoever wakes in the morning with a healthy body, and a self that is sound, and whose provision is assured, he is like the one who possesses the whole world (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*).<sup>2</sup>

c. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

Ask Allah for forgiveness and health. After certainty of faith, nothing better is given to man than good health (*al-Nasa'i*).<sup>3</sup>

d. Amongst the wise sayings of Dawud (peace be upon him) were:

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in *al-Suyuti's medicine of the Prophet*, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in *al-Suyuti's medicine of the Prophet*, p.7.

(i) Health is a hidden kingdom (ii) Sadness for one hour ages a man for one year (iii) Health is a crown on the heads of the healthy that only the sick can see.<sup>4</sup>

## **2. The Prophet's expertise**

Once we accept that the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was taught directly by Allah Almighty, then we are assured that he possessed the best and most comprehensive knowledge of all humans. The Qur'an states:

And He [Allah] taught that which you did not know. And ever great is the grace of Allah upon you (4:113).

In the field of worship, the Messenger of Allah gave us gilt-edged advice and guidance that lead to the doors of paradise. But even in the field of medicine and science, he displayed unbelievable expertise. One example will be given here to highlight this very fact.

### **The dog saliva hadith**

In a hadith reported by Imam Muslim, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) instructed us that when a domestic animal drinks or licks a bowl, then it should be washed three times with water. However, he made an exception with a dog. If a dog licks from a bowl, then it should be washed seven times and it must also be rubbed with earth/soil.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, a group of Muslim scientists in the Middle East conducted experiments to explore this instruction from the Final Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Their extensive tests showed that with animals like cats, the bowl became free from germs and bacteria when it was washed thrice with water. However, they established that with a dog, cleaning the bowl with water alone did not rid it of germs. Rather they found that the germs and bacteria multiplied. It was only by rubbing it with earth that the bowl was totally free from impurities.

The scientific explanation was that the virus from dog saliva is very small and soft. The smaller the size of microbes, the more effective it will be in sticking to the side of a container. Dog saliva contains viruses that are shaped like a ribbon. In this case, soil plays an important role as an absorber of the microbes and viruses that are contained in the vessel. Soil is an effective element that can kill harmful germs. When left outside, a corpse spreads disease quickly. When buried, the effects are neutralised. This is because the soil fights and controls the germs.

In addition to this, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had great *baraka* too. He used to cure others from all types of illnesses:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *Sahih Muslim*. Vol. III, p. 186. Chapter of Cleanliness, (27).

-Al-Qadi Iyad reports in *al-Shifa* that Habib ibn Fudayk's father suffered from blindness in old age. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) blew in his eyes. His eyesight returned. Habib reports that he saw his father insert a thread into a needle at the age of eighty.<sup>6</sup>

-During the battle of Uhud, Qatada (may Allah be pleased with him) was hit in the eye with an arrow. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) placed his blessed saliva on the affected area and placed the eye back in its socket. His sight returned and in fact it became the stronger and more illuminating of the two.<sup>7</sup>

-Salman al-Farisi accepted Islam at the hands of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He at the time was a slave belonging to a Jew. The Prophet purchased him, but the Jew added the condition that Salman will not go free until he plants date trees in his garden and the dates become ripe. Date trees give dates after a minimum of seven years. So the Prophet, with his blessed hands, planted thirty-nine date-tree seeds in the garden. Umar planted the fortieth one. The thirty-nine seeds planted by the Prophet, all became mature within one year and began to give dates during this period. As for the one planted by Umar, it did not grow. The Prophet asked: 'What is wrong with this one?' Umar replied that: 'I am the one who planted this one.' The Prophet dug it up and planted it again with his own blessed hands. It too grew and gave fruit within one year.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The Islamic approach to good health

#### a. The causes of disease

In the case of illness, the scholars have highlighted the actual causes of it into six. Al-Suyuti writes that they are:

i. **Air.** Air is essential to keep the self evenly balanced. As long as the air remains pure, it acts as an invisible protection. Each season produces diseases compatible with it, and expels what is incompatible. For example, summer causes bile but cures cold diseases. Cold air strengthens and improves the digestion system. Hot air has the opposite effect.

ii. **Food and drink.**

iii. **Bodily movement and rest.** Movement causes warmth in the body and vice versa.

iv. **Emotional movement and rest.** This means things like anger, joy, anxiety and shame.

v. **Waking and sleeping.**

vi. **Emission and retention.**

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<sup>6</sup>*Al-Shifa*, al-Qadi Iyad, p. 200.

<sup>7</sup>*Mu'jizat al-Rasul*, Mustafa Murad. p. 50.

<sup>8</sup>*Mu'jizat al-Rasul*, Mustafa Murad. p. 38.

### b. Prevention before cure

Islam works on the idea of prevention rather than cure. Muslims are encouraged to adopt a lifestyle that stops that getting ill in the first place. The certain foods and drinks that are forbidden in Islam works on this exact principle. All are forbidden because they are filthy and harm the mind and body.

Here are just a selection of prophetic advice, aimed at ensuring we do not get ill in the first place.

a. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

‘The children of Adam fill no container worse than the way in which they fill their stomach. Let the children of Adam have a few mouthfuls to strengthen the loins. If possible, one third of the stomach is for food, one third for drink, and one third for one’s breath. (*al-Nasa’i, al-Tirmidhi*)’<sup>9</sup>

b. Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Waqid said: ‘Allah put all medicine into half an ayah when He said:

‘Eat and drink but not excessively’ (7:31).<sup>10</sup>

c. Do not eat one meal immediately after the other.<sup>11</sup>

d. Exercise mildly before a meal, but not immediately after it.<sup>12</sup>

e. The Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade eating the following together at the same meal:

(i) Milk and fish (ii) vinegar and milk (iii) fruit and milk (iv) lettuce and fish (v) garlic and onions (vi) dried meat and fresh meat (vii) grapes and excessive aubergines.<sup>13</sup>

f. The Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade consuming uncovered food and drinks.<sup>14</sup>

g. The Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade eating whilst lying down.<sup>15</sup>

h. Walking after dinner is beneficial and performing Salah has the same effect.<sup>16</sup>

i. Drinking very cold water should be avoided. It results in hoarseness and cough. Constant use of cold water leads to bloody eruptions, catarrh and chest pains.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.101.

#### 4. Specific tips and example of the Prophet's medicine

##### Heart care

The following have been prescribed for heart care:

- Smelling oranges fortifies the heart.<sup>18</sup>
- Lemon juice strengthens the heart.<sup>19</sup>
- The aroma of Rihan (sweet basil) strengthens the heart.<sup>20</sup>
- Lisan al-Ufur (ash tree seeds) too is good for the heart. It also soothes pains in the main organs.<sup>21</sup>
- Eating apples also strengthens the heart, according to al-Fatahi.<sup>22</sup>
- Hilba (fenugreek or *methi*) is also good for the heart. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

If my community had only known what there is in fenugreek, they would have bought it and paid its weight in gold.<sup>23</sup>

- Eating chicken meat is beneficial for heart burns, according to Ibn al-Baytar.<sup>24</sup>
- Anbar (Amber)<sup>25</sup> fortifies the heart and brain. When cooked with rose oil, it soothes heart pains.<sup>26</sup> Yellow amber too has the same effect.<sup>27</sup> Marjan (Coral) has a strong effect on the heart.<sup>28</sup>

Owing to the importance of this organ, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave spiritual remedies for the heart too. One man complained to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about the hardness of his heart. The Prophet told him: 'Stroke the head of an orphan, and give him something to eat.' To another man who made the same complaint, the Prophet said: 'Visit the sick, go to funerals and visit tombs.'<sup>29</sup>

But the best medicine of all for the heart is the *zikr* of Allah.

##### Insomnia

The Prophet (peace be upon him) informed us that the best time to sleep is after the food has been digested. It is Sunna to start off sleeping in the right side. Sleeping during the day is bad because, like al-Suyuti points out, it affects the complexion, gives rise to diseases and makes a man lazy.<sup>30</sup> The Prophet did encourage a *qaylula* however, a short sleep in the hottest part of the day. Jabir

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 106.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 99

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> A fossilized tree resin.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 82.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 88.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p.102.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 175.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

(may Allah be pleased with him reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade a person to sleep (or sit) partly in the sun and partly in the shade. Sleeping facing down is also forbidden. Finally, sleeping in the state of ablution is strongly encouraged. Rihan (sweet basil) can be sprinkled in water to induce sleep.<sup>31</sup>

-The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prescribed the following du'a at night for insomnia:

I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allah from His anger, and from His punishment, and from the evil of His slaves, and from the whispering of the Shaytan and from their presence.<sup>32</sup>

أعوذ بكلمات الله التامة من غضبه و عقابه و شر عباده و من  
همزات الشياطين و أن يحضرون

### Eyesight

Antimony (Athmad) strengthens the optic nerve and preserves the health of the eye,<sup>33</sup> as does Anisun (aniseed)<sup>34</sup>

Eating turnips regularly is good for eyesight as is water melon.<sup>35</sup> Honey used as an eye ointment improves the eyesight.<sup>36</sup>Also, meat improves the eyesight.

### Hair Loss

Imam al-Suyuti writes that if coriander seeds are boiled in fat, they are good for treating baldness and warts.<sup>37</sup>Also, if orange peel is boiled in olive oil, the mixture helps to cure scaly legs and hair loss.<sup>38</sup>

Applying olive oil (as a balm) fortifies the hair.<sup>39</sup> Honey softens the hair, makes it grow longer and beautifies it.<sup>40</sup>Dying with henna is also strongly encouraged<sup>41</sup> (56). When used as a balm, it fortifies the hair and the limbs and delays old age. Mixing henna with Kutm (indigo leaf) also strengthens the hair.<sup>42</sup>

### Headaches

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 64.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 171.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 38.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 73.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.80.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 50.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 106.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 66.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 80.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 89.

In case of a cold headache, the patient should sniff musk, amber and coriander. He should also be given honey to eat. He should avoid drinking cold water. Also dying the head with henna protects a person from headaches. The best colour for Muslims to gaze at is green, as this improves the eyesight. According to al-Bukhari, the same applies to running water.<sup>43</sup>

### **Coughs**

The way to treat coughs is to take barley water, pomegranates prepared with almond oil, milky dishes and soft-boiled eggs. Eating snow, meat and anything that is acidic or salty should be avoided.<sup>44</sup>

### **Liver pains and colics**

Pain in the liver and colic is often caused by eating too much wind-producing foods, such as peas, lentils, dry beans and the entry of food upon food. The cure is to rub the liver area with rose oil.

### **Other major problems...**

#### **Bladder problems**

Water melon is good to remove stones in the kidney and bladder.<sup>45</sup> Drinking olive oil also works quickly in removing stones in the kidney.

#### **Constipation**

Sleeping after immediately eating leads to constipation.<sup>46</sup> Zubd (butter) is good for this.<sup>47</sup>

#### **Sexual desires**

Dates and coconut are said to increase sexual desire in both partners. Rice produces more semen as does carrots, pine kernels, chick-peas, sparrow meat and fresh milk.

#### **Memory**

Currants and milk are good for the memory.

### **Specific foods**

#### **Olives and Olive oil**

When olive oil is used as a balm, it fortifies the hair. It is good for the limbs, and combatting old age. Drinking the oil is beneficial in cases of poisoning. It keeps the bowels on the move, soothes pains and expels worms in the stomach.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 148-9.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.13.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 64.

## **Honey**

Allah Almighty states:

‘...There comes from their bellies a drink of many colours in which there is healing for mankind’ (16: 69)

Ibn Maja reports that Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him) said: ‘Whoever eats honey three times a month will not meet any great disaster.’ He also said: ‘You have two medicines: honey and the Qur’an.’

Honey combats diarrhoea, especially when it is mixed with warm water to drink. It strengthens the stomach and stimulates the appetite. Honey is good for the aged and for those who suffer from phlegm.

It is a great preserver: it is said that it can preserve meat for up to six months. When used as a mouthwash, it protects the health of the gums and whitens the teeth. Eating honey on an empty stomach removes a depraved appetite and clears blockages of the liver, kidney and bladder. It should be used as a substitute for sugar.

The Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to drink a cup on water containing honey on an empty stomach every day. Al-Suyuti writes that ‘this is a tremendously prudent thing to do to preserve one’s health.<sup>48</sup> In short, it is a great cure for our illnesses. In al-Suyuti’s words, ‘it is the food of foods, the drink of drinks and the medicine of medicines.’

As much as possible, Muslims should seek real honey from the shops, as opposed to synthetic honey.

## **Pistachio nuts**

The outer red skin stops vomiting and diarrhoea. It is said that if a person eats pistachio nut kernels with egg yolk, then it gives vitality and fortifies the heart.<sup>49</sup>

## **Cucumbers**

Cucumbers are best when they are ripe. It cools down heat. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) was instructed to eat cucumbers to increase her weight.<sup>50</sup>

## **Pumpkins**

It relieves coughs and it is the best food for anyone with a fever. In a hadith recorded by Imam Muslim, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that pumpkins ‘stimulate the intellect and the brain.’<sup>51</sup>

## **Parsley**

This stimulates sexual intercourse, for both men and women. It has been said that whoever eats parsley before sleeping will have sweet-smelling breath and be free from toothaches.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. pp. 78-81.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p.84.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 85.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 85.



### **Currants**

Currants drive away fatigue, calm down anger, sharpen the nerves, expel phlegm and clear up the complexion.<sup>53</sup>

### **Milk**

Allah Almighty says:

‘...pure milk, tasting good to those who drink it’ (16:66).

This suggests that we should use genuine, raw milk as much as possible. Imam Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi report that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

‘Let whoever is given milk by Allah say, ‘May the blessing of Allah be in it, and may He give us more of it, for I know that there is no better food or drink that can take its place.’

Milk purifies the body, increases semen and stimulates sexual intercourse, relaxes the bowels, relieves depression and stimulates the brain. When taken with sugar, milk improves the complexion and results in plumpness. It also alleviates minor itching and scabies. It also improves the memory.

However it should be avoided by whoever has a headache or a fever. Ibn Abbas reports in a hadith recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to rinse his mouth out after drinking milk, saying that the fat in the milk was bad for those who suffered from fever and headache.<sup>54</sup>

### **Other foods and their qualities**

#### **Meat.**

Allah Almighty says in the Qur’an:

‘And We provide them with whatever fruit and meat that they desire’ (52:22).

Ibn Maja writes that Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘The heart rejoices in eating meat.’

Meat is good for the eyesight and it multiplies the strength.<sup>55</sup> We should try to use organic meat.

### **Coconut**

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.89.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 65

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. pp. 92-96.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 96-99.

Coconut increases sexual potency and is good for back pains.<sup>56</sup>

### **Mint**

Mint fortifies the stomach, stops the hiccups and helps sexual intercourse.

### **Conclusion**

Along with practicing the medicine of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), we should also have faith in it. Only then will it cure us. Abu Sa'id (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that a man came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: 'Truly my brother's stomach is upset.' The Prophet replied; 'Make him have some honey.' So the man's brother went away. He re-appeared some time later and said: 'I have given it him to eat, but he is not any better.' The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) gave him the same advice to give him some honey. The same thing happened twice more. On both the third and fourth occasion, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: 'Allah is the truth and the belly of your brother has lied!' So the man gave his brother honey to consume once again and he was finally cured (*Sahih al-Bukhari*).<sup>57</sup>

### **Further Reading.**

*As-Suyuti's Medicine of the Prophet.*

Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman al-Suyuti. Taha publishers, London (£5.50)

*Healing with the medicine of the Prophet (peace be upon him).* Imam Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah. Darusalam Publications (£14.00). (Also available as an app in the Apple App store.)

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 105.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.78