196796 - Teachings of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) on maintaining good health

the question

Is there any report in the Sunnah in which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) spoke of maintaining good health and looking after one’s skin and hair? What about thinking about his example? What did he do for the purpose of healthy living with ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her)? Or any other example, such as Khadeejah (may Allah be pleased with her) or Faatimah (may Allah be pleased with her)? How did they live a healthy life?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Allah, may He be exalted, sent His Messenger Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as a bringer of glad tidings and as a warner, to bring people forth from darkness to light by His leave, and to guide them to the straight path. He did not send him as a doctor to treat physical illness and sickness. He instructed him to build mosques, and He did not instruct him to build hospitals, but he encouraged people to seek divine remedies by means of the Qur’an which treats diseases of the heart (i.e., spiritual sicknesses) so that they may believe after having disbelieved, and they may obey Allah after having been disobedient, and they may be guided after having been misguided. Allah did not send down the Qur’an in order to prescribe remedies for diseases, even though it is healing for both spiritual and physical disease, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say: It is for those who believe, a guide and a healing”

[Fussilat 41:44]

“And We send down from the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe”

[al-Isra’ 17:82].

Ash-Shawkaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholars differed concerning what is meant by it being a healing, and there are two views. The first view is that it is healing for the hearts, by removing ignorance from them and taking away doubt and clarifying signs that point to Allah, may He be glorified. The second view is that it is healing for visible diseases, by means of ruqya, seeking refuge with Allah, and so on. There is no reason why the word healing cannot be interpreted in both senses.

End quote from Fath al-Qadeer (3/32 6)

Undoubtedly this is because of the blessing (barakah) of the Qur’an and the perfect nature of its virtues. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to treat sickness with the Qur’an, and he used to perform ruqyah by reciting the supplications seeking refuge with Allah (ta‘awwudhaat) as prescribed in Islam, and he used to instruct others to do likewise when they fell sick.

Al-Bukhaari (5016) and Muslim (2192) narrated from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that when he was sick, the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would recite al-Mu’awwidhaat over himself and blow over himself. When his pain got worse, I would recite over him and wipe his hand over him, seeking its blessing..

Al-Bukhaari (3371) narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to seek refuge with Allah for al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and he said: “Your father (Ibraaheem) used to seek refuge with (these words) for Ismaa‘eel and Ishaaq: A‘oodhu bi kalimaat Illaahi’t-taammah min kulli shaytaanin wa haammah wa min kulli ‘aynin laammah (I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allaah from every devil and every vermin, and from every bad eye)”.

He often used to offer supplication for wellbeing and instructed people to do likewise. Wellbeing (‘aafiyah) includes wellbeing in both religious (spiritual) and worldly terms.

It was narrated from ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn Abi Bakrah that he said to his father: O my father, I hear you supplicating every morning (saying), O Allah, grant me soundness in my body; O Allah, grant me soundness in my hearing; O Allah, grant me soundness in my sight, there is no god but You, and you repeat it three times in the morning and three times in the evening. And you say: O Allah, I seek refuge with You from kufr and poverty; O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the torment of the grave; there is no god but You, and you repeat it three times in the morning and three times in the evening He said: Yes, O my son; I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) supplicating with (these words) and I like to follow his Sunnah.

Narrated by Ahmad (19917) and Abu Dawood (5090); classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) occasionally prescribed an appropriate remedy that was not Qur’an or ruqyah; he encouraged use of that which was beneficial and prohibited that which was harmful. Muslim (1204) narrated from ‘Uthmaan (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, concerning a man whose eyes became sore when he was in ihraam, that he should apply aloes to them.

Al-Haakim (7438) narrated from Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “If one of you has a fever, let him sprinkle cold water on himself for three nights as a remedy for witchcraft.” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Saheehah (1310)

Al-Bukhaari (5680) narrated from Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Healing is in three things: drinking honey, the incision of a cupper, and cauterizing with fire, but I forbid my ummah to use cauterizing.”

One of the greatest practices that is good for health and will protect good health against diseases is avoiding overeating, and the prohibition on being extravagant and overindulging in food. At-Tirmidhi (2380) narrated that Miqdaam ibn Ma‘di Karib said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) say: “The son of Adam does not fill any vessel worse

than his stomach. It is enough for the son of Adam to eat a few mouthfuls to keep him going, but if he must (fill his stomach), then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for air."

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is one of the most beneficial practices in both physical and spiritual terms, because if the stomach is filled with food, there is no room for drink, then if that food is followed by drink, there will be no room for air, and he will become tired like one who carries a heavy load. This is in addition to what results from that of spiritual damage, as it will make one too lazy to do acts of worship, and it will stir up physical desires as a result of eating one's fill. Therefore filling the stomach with food is harmful in both spiritual and physical terms.

End quote from Zaad al-Ma'aad (4/17)

The point is that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to take care of himself and of his physical health by means of four things:

1.Ruqyah, reciting Qur'an and supplications seeking refuge with Allah as prescribed in the reports.

2.Supplication (du'aa') and seeking wellbeing.

3.Prevention, which better than cure.

4.The knowledge that Allah granted him of treatment and remedies.

With regard to his hair, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to take care of it by washing it, combing it, applying oil to it and dyeing it with henna, and he used to say: "Whoever has hair; let him take care of it." Narrated by Abu Dawood (4163); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

At-Tirmidhi (1851) narrated that 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Eat olive oil and anoint yourselves with it, for it comes from a

blessed tree.” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi.

With regard to his eyes, it is proven that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to apply kohl three times to his right eye and twice to his left eye. Narrated by Ibn Sa‘d in at-Tabaqaat al-Kubra (1/376); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Saheehah (633)

At-Tirmidhi (1757) narrated from Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Apply ithmid (antimony) to your eyes, for it makes the vision clear and makes the hair grow.” Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi.

For more details on the practice of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) concerning such matters, we advise you to read the book by Imam Ibn al-Qayyim: Zaad al-Ma‘aad fi Hadiy Khayr al-‘Ibaad, especially the fourth volume, which deals specifically with Prophetic medicine. We also advise you to read the chapters that deal with this topic in the book al-Aadaab ash-Shar‘iyyah wa’l-Minah al-Mar‘iyyah by Shams ad-Deen Ibn Muflih al-Hanbali.

However the wise person should not focus all his attention on such matters; rather his main concern should be the Hereafter and that which will save him before Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Ibn Maajah (257) narrated from ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever focuses all his concerns on one issue, namely the Hereafter, Allah will suffice him and spare him the worries of this world. But whoever has many concerns about different worldly issues, Allah will not care which of these worries will cause his death.”

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Ibn Maajah (207)

And Allah knows best.