Celsus, *De Medicina*, Book 2 (Prologue; 2.1.1-5; 2.18.1-13)  trans. by W.G. Spencer (1935)

Prologue: Of impending disorders there are many signs, in explaining which I shall not hesitate to make use of the authority of ancient men, and especially of Hippocrates; for although more recent practitioners have made some changes in methods of treatment, they allow none the less that the ancients prognosticated best. Before I note, however, those preceding symptoms which suggest fear of disease, it does not seem unfitting to set out: the seasons of the year, the sorts of weather, periods of life and temperaments which may be in particular safe or open to risks, and what kind of disorders is most to be apprehended in each. Not that men may not sicken and die at any season, in any sort of weather, at any age, whatever their temperament, from any kind of disease, but since certain kinds occur less . . . but some kinds occur more often, so it is of use that everyone should recognize against what, and when, he should be most on his guard.

1.1 So then spring is the most salubrious, next after it comes winter; summer is rather more dangerous than salubrious, autumn is by far the most dangerous.

1.2 But as regards weather the best is that which is settled, whether cold or hot, the worst that which is the most changeable, and that is why autumn brings down the greatest number. For generally about midday there is heat, but at night and in the early morning, cold, as also in the evening. Thus the body, relaxed by the preceding summer, and now by the midday heat, is caught by the sudden cold. But while this chiefly occurs at this season, so whenever the like happens harm is done.

1.3 In settled weather fine days are the most salubrious, rainy better than foggy or cloudy days; and in winter the best days are those in which there is an entire absence of wind, in summer those in which westerly winds blow. As for the other winds, the northerly are more salubrious than those from the sunrising or south; nevertheless, these vary somewhat according to the character of the district.

1.4 For almost everywhere wind when coming from inland is salubrious, and injurious when from the sea. And not only is health more assured in settled weather, but pre-existing diseases also, if there have been any, are milder and more quickly terminated. But the worst weather for
the sick man is that which has caused his sickness, so much so that a change to weather of a
naturally worse sort may be, in his condition, salutary.

1.5 The middle period of life is the safest, for it is not disturbed by the heat of youth, nor by the
chill of age. Old age is more exposed to chronic diseases, youth to acute ones. The square-built
frame, neither thin nor fat, is the fittest; for tallness, as it is graceful in youth, shrinks in
the fulness of age; a thin frame is weak, a fat one sluggish.

1.6 In spring those diseases are usually to be apprehended which are stirred up anew by
movement of humor. Consequently there tend to arise runnings from the eyes, pustules,
haemorrhages, congestions in the body, which the Greeks call apostemata, black bile which they
call melancholia, madness, fits, angina, choked nostrils, running from the nose. Also those
diseases which affect joints and sinews, being at one time troublesome, at another quiescent, then
especially both begin and recur.

1.7 But summer, while not wholly exempt from most of the foregoing maladies, adds to them
fevers whether continued or ardent or tertian, vomitings, diarrhoeas, earaches, oral ulcerations,
cankers which occur on other parts but especially upon the pudenda, and whatever exhausts the
patient by sweating.

1.8 In autumn there is scarcely one of the foregoing which does not happen; but at this season in
addition there arise irregular fevers, splenic pain, subcutaneous dropsy, consumption, called by
the Greeks phthisis, urinary difficulty, which they call strangury, the small intestine malady
which they term ileos, the intestinal lubricity which they call leienteria, hip-pains, fits.

1.9 Autumn too is a season fatal to those exhausted by chronic diseases and overwhelmed by the
heat just past, others it weakens by fresh maladies; and it involves some in very chronic ones,
especially quartan fevers, which may last even through the winter. Nor is any other period of the
year more exposed to pestilence of whatever sort; although it is harmful in a variety of ways.
Winter provokes headache, coughs, and all the affections which attack the throat, and the sides of
the chest and lungs.
1.10 Of the various sorts of weather, the north wind excites cough, irritates the throat, constipates the bowels, suppresses the urine, excites shiverings, as also pain of the lungs and chest. Nevertheless it is bracing to a healthy body, rendering it more mobile and brisk.

1.11 The south wind dulls hearing, blunts the senses, produces headache, loosens the bowels; the body as a whole is rendered sluggish, humid, languid. The other winds, as they approximate to the north or south wind, produce affections corresponding to the one or other. Moreover, any hot weather inflates the liver and spleen, and dulls the mind; the result is that there are faintings, that there is an outburst of blood.

1.12 Cold on the other hand brings about: at times tenseness of sinews which the Greeks call spasmos, at times the rigor which they call tetanos, the blackening of ulcerations, shiverings in fevers. In times of drought there arise acute fevers, runnings from the eyes, dysenteries, urinary difficulty, articular pains. In wet weather there occur chronic fevers, diarrhoeas, angina, canker, fits, and the loosening of sinews which the Greeks call paralysis.

1.13 Not only does the weather of the day but also of the preceding days matter. If a dry winter has been accompanied by north winds, or again a spring by south winds and rain, generally there ensue runnings from the eye, dysenteries, fevers, and most of all in more delicate bodies, hence especially in women.

1.14 If on the other hand south winds and rain have prevailed during winter, and the spring is cold and dry, pregnant women near their confinement are in danger of miscarrying; those indeed who reach term, give birth only to weaklings hardly alive. Other people are attacked by dry ophthalmia, and if elderly by choked nostrils and runnings from the nose.

1.15 But when the south wind prevails from the beginning of winter to the end of spring, side pains, also the insanity of those in fever which is called phrenesis, are very rapidly fatal. And when hot weather begins in the spring, and lasts through the summer, severe sweating must ensue in cases of fever. If a summer has been kept dry by northerly winds, but in the autumn there are showers and south winds, there may then arise cough, runnings from the nose, hoarseness, and indeed in some, consumption.
1.16 But if the autumn is dry owing to a north wind continuing to blow, all those with more delicate bodies, among whom, as I have mentioned, are women, enjoy good health. The harder constitutions, however, may possibly be attacked by dry ophthalmias, and by fevers, some acute, some chronic, also by those maladies which arise from black bile.

1.17 As regards the various times of life, children and adolescents enjoy the best health in spring, and are safest in early summer; old people are at their best during summer and the beginning of autumn; young and middle-aged adults in winter.

1.18 At these periods should any indisposition arise, it is very probable that infants and children still of tender age should suffer from the creeping ulcerations of the mouth which the Greeks call aphthas, vomiting, insomnia, discharges from the ear, and inflammations about the navel. Especially in those teething there arise ulcerations of the gums, slight fevers, sometimes spasms, diarrhoea; and they suffer as the canine teeth in particular are growing up; the most well-nourished children, and those constipated, are especially in danger.

1.19 In those somewhat older there occur affections of the tonsils, various spinal curvatures, swelling in the neck, the painful kind of warts which the Greeks call acrochordones, and a number of other swellings. At the commencement of puberty, in addition to many of the above troubles, there occur chronic fevers and also nose-bleedings.

1.20 Throughout childhood there are special dangers, first about the fortieth day, then in the seventh month, next in the seventh year, and after that about puberty. The sorts of affections which occur in infancy, when not ended by the time of puberty, or of the first coitions, or of the first menstruations in the females, generally become chronic; more often, however, puerile affections, after persisting for a rather long while, come to an end.

1.21 Adolescence is liable to acute diseases, such as fits, especially to consumption; those who spit blood are generally youths. After that age come on pain in the side and lung, lethargy, cholera, madness, and outpourings of blood from certain mouths of veins which the Greeks call haemorrhoids.
In old age there occur breathing and urinary difficulties, choked nostrils, joint and renal pains, paralysis, the bad habit of body which the Greeks call cachexia, insomnias, the more chronic maladies of the ears, eyes, also of the nostrils, and especially looseness of the bowels with its sequences, dysentery, intestinal lubricity, and the other ills due to bowel looseness.

In addition thin people are fatigued by consumption, diarrhoea, running from the nose, pain in the lung and side. The obese, many of them, are throttled by acute diseases and difficult breathing; they die often suddenly, which rarely happens in a thinner person.

Now antecedent to illness, as I have stated above, certain signs arise, all of which have this in common, that the body becomes altered from its accustomed state, and that not only for the worse, but it may be even for the better. Hence when a man has become fatter and better looking and with a higher colour, he should regard with suspicion these gains of his for, because they can neither remain in the same state nor advance further, as a rule they fall back in a sort of collapse.

Still it is a worse sign when anyone, contrary to his habit, becomes thinner, and loses his colour and good looks; for when there is a superfluity of flesh there is something for the disease to draw upon; when there is a deficiency, there is nothing to hold out against the disease itself. Further, there should be apprehension at once: if the limbs become heavier, if frequent ulcerations arise, if the body feels hotter than customary; if heavier sleep oppresses, if there are tumultuous dreams, if anyone wakes up oftener than usual, then falls asleep again; if the body of the sleeper has partial sweats in unaccustomed places, and especially about the chest or neck or legs or knees or hips.

Again, if the spirit flags, if he is reluctant to talk or move about, if the body be torpid; if there is pain over the heart or over all the chest, or of the head as happens in most; if the mouth becomes filled with saliva, if there is pain in turning the eyes, if the troops are constricted, when the limbs shiver, if the breathing becomes more laboured; if the blood-vessels of the forehead are distended and throb, if there are frequent yawns; if the knees feel as if fatigued, or the whole body feels weary.
2.4 Of these signs, many are often, some always, antecedents of fever. The first thing, however, to be considered is, whether any of these signs happen somewhat frequently, yet no bodily trouble has followed it. For there are some peculiarities of persons, without knowledge of which it is not easy for anybody to prognosticate what is going to happen. Consequently anyone may readily be at ease in the case of happenings which he has frequently escaped without harm: the man who ought to be anxious is the one to whom these signs are new, or who has never found them free from danger unless he has taken precautions.

3.1 But when fever has actually seized upon a man, it may be known that he is not in danger: if he lies upon his side, whether on his right or left, just as suits him, with his legs a little drawn up, as is generally the way with a healthy person when lying down; if the patient turns readily in bed, if he sleeps through the night, and keeps awake by day; if he breathes easily; if he does not toss about; if the skin around the navel and pubes is plump; if the parts below the ribs on the two sides are uniformly soft, without any sensation of pain; (3.2) for even although they are somewhat tumid, so long as they yield to pressure by the fingers, and are not tender, this illness, though it will continue for some time, yet will be safe. There is promise of freedom from anxiety when the body in general is uniformly soft and warm, and it sweats uniformly all over, and if with this sweating the touch of fever comes to an end.

3.3 Among good signs are: sneezing, also a desire for food, whether maintained from the first, or even beginning after a distaste for food. Nor should a fever which ends on the same day cause alarm, nor indeed one which, although longer in disappearing, yet entirely quiets down before the next paroxysm, so that the body is rendered sound, or, as the Greeks call it, eilikrines.

3.4 But should any vomiting occur, it should be of bile and of phlegm mixed; any sediment in the urine would be white, slimy, and uniform, and so that even if small clouds, as it were, are swimming in it, they sink to the bottom.

3.5 Again the belly of one who is safe from danger yields soft, formed motions, at much the same time as was customary in health, as well as proportionate to the food taken. A loose motion is worse; but not even this should cause alarm at once, if on the following morning the stool is
rather more solid, or if each succeeding motion becomes firmer, reddish, and smelling no worse than that of a man in health.

3.6 There is no harm in passing off some round worms towards the crisis of the malady. When flatulence causes pain and swelling in the upper part of the abdomen, it is a good sign when intestinal rumbling passes thence downwards towards the lower belly, and the more so, when without difficulty the wind escapes along with the faeces.

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18.1 After having spoken of those things which benefit by depleting, we come to those which nourish, namely food and drink. Now these are of general assistance not only in diseases of all kinds but in preserving health as well; and an acquaintance with the properties of all is of importance, in the first place that those in health may know how to make use of them, then, as we follow on to the treatment of diseases we can state the species of aliments to be consumed, without the necessity every time of naming them singly.

18.2 So then it should be known that all pulses, and all bread-stuffs made from grain, form the strongest kind of food (I call strongest that which has most nourishment). To the same class of further belong: all domesticated quadruped animals; all large game such as the wild she-goat, deer, wild boar, wild ass; all large birds, such as the goose and peacock and crane; all sea monsters, among which is the whale and such like; also honey and cheese. Hence it is not wonderful that pastry made of grain, lard, honey and cheese is very strong food.

18.3 Among food materials of the middle class ought to be reckoned: of pot-herbs, those of which the roots or bulbs are eaten; of quadrupeds, the hare; birds of all kinds from the smallest up to the flamingo; likewise all fish which do not bear salting or are salted whole. The weakest of food materials are: all vegetable stalks and whatever forms on a stalk, such as the gourd and cucumber and caper, all orchard fruits, olives, snails, and likewise shellfish.

18.4 But although these are so divided, nevertheless even those of the same species admit of great differentiation, one thing being stronger or weaker than another: whilst there is more nutriment in bread than in anything else, wheat is a stronger food than millet, and that again than
barley; and of wheat the strongest is siligo, next simila, then the meal from which nothing is extracted, which the Greeks call autopuros; weaker is bread made from pollen, weakest the common grey bread.

18.5 Among pulses, bean and lentils are stronger food than peas. Of vegetables the turnip and navew and all bulbs, among which I include the onion also and garlic, are stronger than the parsnip, or that which is specially called a root. Also cabbage and beet and leek are stronger than lettuce or gourd or asparagus.

18.6 But of fruit growing on twigs, grapes, figs, nuts, dates are stronger than orchard fruit properly so-called; and of these last, the juicy are stronger than the mealy. Likewise of those birds, which belong to the middle class, those which rely more on their feet are stronger food than those which rely more on their wings; and of those birds which depend on flight, the larger birds yield stronger food than the smaller, such as the fig-eater and thrush. And those also which pass their time in the water yield a weaker food than those which have no knowledge of swimming.

18.7 Among food from domesticated quadrupeds pork is the weakest, beef the strongest. And so also of game, the larger the animal the stronger the food it yields. The fish most in use belong to the middle class; the strongest are, however, those from which salted preparations can be made, such as the mackerel; next come those which, although more tender, are nevertheless firm, such as the gilthead, gurnard, sea bream, eyefish, then the flat fish, and after these still softer, the bass and mullets, and after these all rock fish.

18.8 Not only is there differentiation in the classes of nutriments, but also as much in the actual species of nutriment; which is due both to age and part of the animal and to soil and to climate and to habit. For every four-footed animal yields less nutriment while it is a suckling, likewise a chicken in a coop, the more tender it is; also a half-grown fish, which has not filled out to its full size. Then likewise in the same pig, trotters, chaps, ears or brain, in a lamb or kid the whole head, also the pettitoes, are somewhat less nutritious than other parts, and so can be placed in the middle class.
18.9 In birds, the neck and wings are rightly counted as weak nutriment. As regards soil, grain is also more nutritious grown in hilly than in flat districts; fish living among rocks are less nutritious than those in sand, and these again less than those in mud. Hence it is that the same classes of fish from a pond or lake or river are heavier, and those which live in deep water are lighter food than those which live in shallows. Every wild animal is a lighter food than the same species domesticated, and the product of a damp climate is lighter than that of a dry one. Again, all kinds of fat meat have more nutriment than lean, (18.10) fresh meat than salted, recently killed than stale. Then the same meat is more nourishing stewed than roasted, more so roasted than boiled. A hard-boiled egg is a very substantial material, a soft cooker or raw egg very light. And while all bread-stuffs are among the most solid, yet some kinds of grain after being soaked, such as spelt, rice, pearl barley, or the gruel or porridge made out of these, and also bread soaked in water, can be reckoned among the weakest of food.

18.11 Of drinks too the strongest class are: whatever can be made from grain, likewise milk, mead, must boiled down, raisin wine, wine either sweet or heady or still fermenting or of great age. But vinegar, and that wine which is a few years old, whether dry or rich, are intermediate in quality; and therefore to weak patients nothing of the other class should be given. Water is of all the weakest; and drink from grain is the more nutritious, according as the grain itself is nutritious; wine coming from a good soil is more nutritious than from a poor one, that from a temperate climate more nutritious than from an extreme one, whether too wet or too dry, whether excessively cold or hot.

18.12 Mead, the more honey it contains, must the more it is boiled down, raisin wine the drier the grapes - are the stronger. Rain water is the lightest, then spring water, next water from a river, than from a well, after that from snow or ice; heavier still is water from a lake, the heaviest from a marsh. The recognition of water is as easy as it is necessary for those who want to know its nature. For by weighing, the lightness of water becomes evident, and of water of equal weight, that is the better, which most quickly heats or cools, also in which pulse is most quickly cooked.

18.13 It is generally the case too that the more substantial the material, the less readily it is digested, but once digested it nourishes the more. Thus the quality of the food administered
should be in accordance with the patient's strength, and the quantity in accordance with its quality. For weak patients, therefore, there is needed the lightest food; food of the middle class best sustains those moderately strong, and for the robust the strongest is the fittest. Finally, of the lightest foods more can be taken; it is rather with the strongest food that moderation should be observed.