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A History of Health Practices

The Clean and the Unclean Since the Middle Ages

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Elixirs, potions, dietary restrictions: the art of trying to live longer has deep roots in tradition.

This book explores various methods for self-care, from its presence in the most everyday acts to its interference with science and religion, its ties to bodily self-image, its benefits during epidemics and civic defense, and the long, slow process of its adoption in public initiatives.

This history emphasizes how the lines between "healthy" and "unhealthy" has shifted over time. Physical thresholds of pain, the visual appearance of the sickly and their afflictions vary from civilization to civilization.
