

Chinese Herbs Overview



*Traditional Chinese medicine
(TCM) Has Evolved Over
Thousands Of Years*

HEALTH BENEFITS

To date, Western scientists have not extensively studied the use of traditional Chinese medicine in the treatment of specific health conditions. However, traditional Chinese medicine is used to address the following conditions:

CHINESE GINSENG

The use of Chinese ginseng (人參; 人參) is well over 2,000 years old in Chinese medicine. The constituents include steroid saponins known as ginsenosides. The amount of ginsenosides in Chinese ginseng depends on how the plant was cultivated and the age of the root. Wild Chinese ginseng, believed to be of highest TCM quality, has become rare in its natural habitat, so natural fostering efforts are utilized to emulate the wild variety. Chinese ginseng can be white or red, depending on how it is processed. White Chinese ginseng is unprocessed and dried naturally. Red Chinese ginseng is processed with steam and, in TCM, is believed to be more potent.

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HERBS IN USE

Chinese herbology is a pseudoscientific practice with potentially unreliable product quality, safety hazards or misleading health advice. There are regulatory bodies, such as China GMP (Good Manufacturing Process) of herbal products. However, there have been notable cases of an absence of quality control during herbal product preparation. There is a lack of high-quality scientific research on herbology practices and product effectiveness for anti-disease activity. In the herbal sources listed below, there is little or no evidence for efficacy or proof of safety across consumer age groups and disease conditions for which they are intended.

There are over 300 herbs in common use. Some of the most commonly used herbs are Ginseng (人參; rénshēn), wolfberry (枸杞子; gǒuqǐzi), dong quai (*Angelica sinensis*, 当归; dāngguī), astragalus (黄耆; huángqí);

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There is little rationale for use of cinnabar in the US; there are many good alternatives for sedation—herbal or otherwise. But it is important to be aware of it, since it is a fairly common ingredient in patent medicines imported from China or other Asian countries.

Kampo: Japan's Herbal Tradition Emerges in US Well-Oiled: A Guide to Healthy Dietary Fats Cultures of Healing: Traditional Fermented Foods Find Their Place in the Modern World Cooking with the Spices of Life Home Sleep Monitoring Opens Gateway for Better Apnea Control Metabolic Cardiology: Solving the Heart's Energy Crisis

CHINESE HERBAL PRODUCTS

Chinese herbal products have been studied for many medical problems, including stroke, heart disease, mental disorders, and respiratory diseases (such as bronchitis and the common cold), and a national survey showed that about one in five Americans use them. Because many studies have been of poor quality, no firm conclusions can be made about their effectiveness. For more information about specific herbs, see NCCIH's Herbs at a Glance Web page. You can find additional information on botanical (plant) dietary supplements on the Office of Dietary Supplements Web site.

What the Science Says About the Safety of Traditional Chinese Medicine

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What the Science Says About the Safety of Traditional Chinese Medicine

Reports and studies of herbal products used in TCM have found a variety of safety issues.

Some Chinese herbal products have been found to be contaminated with undeclared plant or animal material; drugs (such as the blood-thinner warfarin and the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agent diclofenac); heavy metals (such as arsenic, lead, and cadmium); pesticides or compounds called sulfites, which could cause asthma or severe allergic reactions; or incorrect herbs, some of which have caused organ damage.

Relatively few complications from using acupuncture have been reported. Still, complications have resulted from the use of nonsterile needles and improper delivery of treatments. When not delivered properly, acupuncture can cause serious adverse effects, including infections, punctured organs, collapsed lungs, and injury to the central nervous system.

Tai chi and a similar technique called qi gong appear to be safe practices. While it's unlikely that tai chi will result in serious injury, it may be associated with minor aches and pains. Women who are pregnant should talk with their health care providers before beginning tai chi, qi gong, or any other

HISTORY

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HOW DO TCM PRACTITIONERS USE FORMULATIONS?

TCM practitioners most often use two or more substances in Chinese medicinal formulations to create a balanced, synergistic effect that reflects the holistic nature of the diagnosis.

Although there are literally thousands of traditional herbal formulas for just about every condition imaginable, a formula is almost always modified by the TCM practitioner to suit the subtle nuances of the condition and constitution of the patient, making each formulation highly individualized.

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Chinese medicinal formulations are prepared in a number of different ways:

Chinese herbal decoctions. The most traditional method of preparing an herbal formula in China, decoctions can involve lengthy preparation and result in "teas" infamous for their strong taste and aroma. For these reasons decoctions are not as popular or as widely used in the west.

Herbal powders, which can be mixed with hot water to make a tea, are more convenient to prepare and use, and are not as pungent as traditional decoctions.

Chinese Patent Formulas are pre-made herbal formulations in pill or tablet form and are perhaps the most widely used form of Chinese herbal medicine outside of China.

Syrups, which are soothing preparations for coughs and sore throat, are also a convenient way to administer herbal formulations to children.

Liniments, salves, compresses and plasters, which are used for external application. Herbal therapy, next to dietary therapy, is perhaps the most

ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

The traditional practice of using (by now) endangered species is controversial within TCM. Modern *Materia Medica*s such as Bensky, Clavey and Stoger's comprehensive Chinese herbal text discuss substances derived from endangered species in an appendix, emphasizing alternatives.

Parts of endangered species used as TCM drugs include tiger bones and rhinoceros horn. Poachers supply the black market with such substances, and the black market in rhinoceros horn, for example, has reduced the world's rhino population by more than 90 percent over the past 40 years. Concerns have also arisen over the use of turtle plastron and seahorses.

TCM recognizes bear bile as a medicinal. In 1988, the Chinese Ministry of Health started controlling bile production, which previously used bears killed before winter. Now bears are fitted with a cast of permanent catheter which

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TCM recognizes bear bile as a medicinal. In 1988, the Chinese Ministry of Health started controlling bile production, which previously used bears killed before winter. Now bears are fitted with a sort of permanent catheter, which is more profitable than killing the bears. More than 12,000 asiatic black bears are held in "bear farms", where they suffer cruel conditions while being held in tiny cages. The catheter leads through a permanent hole in the abdomen directly to the gall bladder, which can cause severe pain. Increased international attention has mostly stopped the use of bile outside of China; gallbladders from butchered cattle (牛胆; 牛膽; niú dǎn) are recommended as a substitute for this ingredient.

CHINESE HERBOLGY

Chinese herbology (simplified Chinese: 中药学; traditional Chinese: 中藥學; pinyin: zhōngyào xué) is the theory of traditional Chinese herbal therapy, which accounts for the majority of treatments in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). A Nature editorial described TCM as "fraught with pseudoscience", and said that the most obvious reason why it has not delivered many cures is that the majority of its treatments have no logical mechanism of action.

The term herbology is misleading in the sense that, while plant elements are by far the most commonly used substances, animal, human, and mineral products are also utilized, among which some are poisonous. In the Huangdi Neijing they are referred to as 毒藥 [duyao] which means toxin, poison, or medicine. Unschuld points out that this is similar etymology to the Greek pharmakon and so he uses the term "pharmaceutic". Thus, the term

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Research into the effectiveness of traditional Chinese herbal therapy is of poor quality and often tainted by bias, with little or no rigorous evidence of efficacy. There are concerns over a number of potentially toxic Chinese herbs.

WHAT THE SCIENCE SAYS ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Acupuncture

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Acupuncture is a technique in which practitioners stimulate specific points on the body, usually by inserting thin needles through the skin. Studies suggest that acupuncture stimulates the release of the body's natural painkillers and affects areas in the brain involved in processing pain; however, some trials suggest that real acupuncture and sham acupuncture are equally effective, indicating a placebo effect. Results from a number of studies, however, suggest real acupuncture may help ease types of pain that are often chronic, such as low-back pain, neck pain, osteoarthritis/knee pain, and carpal tunnel syndrome. It also may help reduce the frequency of tension headaches and prevent migraine headaches. For more information, see NCCIH's acupuncture fact sheet.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The locations or provinces in which herbs are grown often figure into herb names. For example, Bei Sha Shen (*Radix glehniae*) is grown and harvested in northern China, whereas Nan Sha Shen (*Radix adenophorae*) originated in southern China. And the Chinese words for north and south are respectively *bei* and *nan*. [30]

Chuan Bei Mu (*Bulbus fritillariae cirrhosae*) and Chuan Niu Xi (*Radix cyathulae*) are both found in Sichuan province, as the character "chuan" indicates in their names.

Lyannette) are both found in Jackson province, as the character Linnah indicates in their names.

CHINESE HERBAL EXTRACTS

Chinese herbal extracts are herbal decoctions that have been condensed into a granular or powdered form. Herbal extracts, similar to patent medicines, are easier and more convenient for patients to take. The industry extraction standard is 5:1, meaning for every five pounds of raw materials, one pound of herbal extract is derived.

SIX CHINESE HERBS

NEW ORLEANS—Traditional Chinese medicine holds a vast pharmacopeia of herbs, minerals, animal tissues and other natural products. But in the US, only a small number are in widespread use outside of Chinese immigrant communities.

Michael Arnold, MD, a Pacific Grove, CA, pediatrician who now practices exclusively as a Chinese herbalist, said there are six Chinese herbs with which every physician should be familiar. "You will see these in your practice—if you ask," Dr. Arnold told attendees at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture.

The more you know about these herbs, the more you can counsel curious patients. Under the guidance of an intelligent, experienced herbalist, "taking TCM herbs is much safer than getting in your car to buy them." Dr. Arnold

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EPHEDRA (Ma Huang): This is used widely by Chinese practitioners, often to treat asthma or induce sweating. But unlike the common pattern in the US, Chinese herbalists almost never use it as a single agent, and certainly do not use it for weight loss. "Here, it is sold like 'herbal caffeine.' You can get it at truck stops and 7-11s. It is just like speed, and there are reports of adverse events when people have taken it for the 'buzz,' or for weight loss."

Ephedra can induce hypertension, restlessness, tremors, tachycardia, palpitations and insomnia. Though it is a stimulant, classical Chinese medicine does not recommend it to treat fatigue; if the fatigue is due to an energy deficiency of some sort, a stimulant like ephedra will only exacerbate the depletion. In general, this herb is for short-term use only.

Nearly all reported problems with ephedra reflect improper use without guidance. Under proper supervision, it is an effective herb for asthma. It is also a "warming" herb according to Chinese medical theory, used when "coldness" of some sort is at the root of a diagnosis. Unfortunately, it is easier

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into clinically useful "patterns" (zheng 證) that could serve as targets for therapy. Having gone through numerous changes over time, it now circulates as two distinct books: the Treatise on Cold Damage Disorders and the Essential Prescriptions of the Golden Casket, which were edited separately in the eleventh century, under the Song dynasty.

Succeeding generations augmented these works, as in the Yaoxing Lun (药性论; 藥性論; 'Treatise on the Nature of Medicinal Herbs'), a 7th-century Tang dynasty Chinese treatise on herbal medicine.

The use of Chinese herbs was popular during the medieval age in western Asian and Islamic countries. They were traded through the Silk Road from the East to the West. Cinnamon, ginger, rhubarb, nutmeg and cubeb are mentioned as Chinese herbs by medieval Islamic medical scholars Such as Rhazes (854– 925 CE), Haly Abbas (930-994 CE) and Avicenna (980-1037 CE). There were also multiple similarities between the clinical uses of these herbs in Chinese and Islamic medicine.

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widely used TCM treatment modality. TCM relies on herbal therapies both for the treatment of illness and in the optimization of health and prevention of disease.

TCM HERBS

Rather than prescribing specific herbs, practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine typically combine a number of different herbs in formulas selected depending on the patient's individual needs. These formulas may be given as teas, capsules, tinctures, or powders.

Herbs commonly used in traditional Chinese medicine include:

Astragalus

Ginkgo biloba

Red yeast rice

Cinnamon

Ginseng

UUNGU UUUU

Red yeast rice

Cinnamom

Ginger

Ginseng

Gotu kola

Yu Xing Cao

While consumers face risks when purchasing any dietary supplement (such as contamination with other substances) due to a lack of regulation, these risks may be of greater magnitude with herbal products that have been manufactured abroad, particularly those containing a variety of herbs.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS IN CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE

The TCM philosophy proposes that everything including organs of the body - is composed of the five elements: fire, earth, metal, water and wood. The herbs are similarly classified into the five tastes - sweet, salty, bitter, pungent and sour - which correspond to the five elements, for example, since the skin is a metal element Yang organ, it would be treated with a pungent herb.

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NCCIH CLEARINGHOUSE

The NCCIH Clearinghouse provides information on NCCIH and complementary and integrative health approaches, including publications and searches of Federal databases of scientific and medical literature. The Clearinghouse does not provide medical advice, treatment recommendations, or referrals to practitioners.

CHINESE PHARMACOPOEIA

Chinese herbs have been used for centuries. Among the earliest literature are lists of prescriptions for specific ailments, exemplified by the manuscript "Recipes for 52 Ailments", found in the Mawangdui which were sealed in 168 BC.

The first traditionally recognized herbalist is Shénnóng (神农, lit. "Divine Farmer"), a mythical god-like figure, who is said to have lived around 2800 BC. He allegedly tasted hundreds of herbs and imparted his knowledge of medicinal and poisonous plants to farmers. His Shénnóng Běn Cǎo Jīng (神农本草经, Shennong's Materia Medica) is considered as the oldest book on Chinese herbal medicine. It classifies 365 species of roots, grass, woods, furs,

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The "superior" category, which includes herbs effective for multiple diseases and are mostly responsible for maintaining and restoring the body balance. They have almost no unfavorable side-effects.

A category comprising tonics and boosters, whose consumption must not be prolonged.

A category of substances which must usually be taken in small doses, and for the treatment of specific diseases only.

The original text of Shennong's Materia Medica has been lost; however, there are extant translations. The true date of origin is believed to fall into the late Western Han dynasty (i.e., the first century BC).

The Treatise on Cold Damage Disorders and Miscellaneous Illnesses was collated by Zhang Zhongjing, also sometime at the end of the Han dynasty, between 196 and 220 CE. Focusing on drug prescriptions, it was the first medical work to combine Yin yang and the Five Phases with drug therapy. This formulary was also the earliest Chinese medical text to group symptoms

HERBS USED IN CHINESE MEDICINE

Chinese herbal medicines are mainly plant based, but some preparations include minerals or animal products. They can be packaged as powders, pastes, lotions or tablets, depending on the herb and its intended use. Different herbs have different properties and can balance particular parts of the body. Prescribing a particular herb or concoction of herbs means the practitioner's diagnosis has to take into account the state of the patient's Yin and Yang, and the elements that are governing the affected organs.

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SPECIFIC FUNCTION

These categories mainly include:

exterior-releasing or exterior-resolving

heat-clearing

downward-draining or precipitating

wind-damp-dispelling

dampness-transforming

promoting the movement of water and percolating dampness or dampness-percolating

interior-warming

ACUPUNCTURE POINTS

promoting the movement of water and percolating dampness or dampness-percolating

interior-warming

qi-regulating or qi-rectifying

dispersing food accumulation or food-dispersing

worm-expelling

stopping bleeding or blood-stanching

quickening the Blood and dispelling stasis or blood-quickening or Blood-moving

transforming phlegm, stopping coughing and calming wheezing or phlegm-transforming and cough- and panting-suppressing

Spirit-quieting or Shen-calming

calming the Liver and expelling wind or Liver-calming and wind-extinguishing

orifice-opening

supplementing or tonifying: this includes qi-supplementing, blood-nourishing, yin-enriching, and yang-fortifying.

can reduce urine output, decrease sodium excretion and increase potassium excretion. Theoretically, it can cause hypertension and edema. In practice, this is very rare, because the amount of licorice in Chinese formulations is usually very small. Overall, this is a very safe herb.

PANAX GINSENG (Ren Shen): Without doubt, one of the most widely used Chinese herbs in America, panax ginseng has a popular reputation as an energy booster, immune system enhancer, and a quick fix for fatigue. But without a careful Chinese diagnosis, use of a strong tonic like ginseng is a dice-roll: it will work for some people but an equal number will not benefit.

Some patients may even have adverse effects, including hypertension. Tonic herbs like ginseng can exacerbate headaches, insomnia and rashes. They can also be relatively difficult to digest, resulting in constipation, loss of appetite, and other gastrointestinal discomforts—a symptom pattern Dr. Arnold referred to as "tonic tummy."

Be aware that "Red Ginseng" is different from panax ginseng. The latter is naturally whitish; "red" ginseng has been processed with aconite (see above) to intensify the warming nature of ginseng. The aconite confers the red color.

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Be aware that "Red Ginseng" is different from panax ginseng. The latter is naturally whitish; "red" ginseng has been processed with aconite (see above) to intensify the warming nature of ginseng. The aconite confers the red color. A patient taking "red" ginseng will likely be getting a significant dose of aconite as well. This is probably not good for patients with cardiovascular problems.

RHUBARB ROOT/RHIZOME (Da Huang): This is a common purgative in Chinese medicine, given for diagnoses related to "excess heat" and "blood stagnation," which can manifest in some cases of constipation. While it is generally safe, it can cause abdominal pain, cramping and diarrhea. Because it has a laxative effect, there is some potential for abuse in patients who have histories of laxative overuse. Rhubarb is another herb that must be boiled for at least one hour to reduce its potential toxicity.

Many of the minerals and animal products used in Chinese medicine are seldom seen outside Asian communities, but Dr. Arnold said there is one non-herbal substance about which all physicians should be aware:

CINNABAR (Zhu Sha): Cinnabar is commonly used in China as a sedative. But it contains mercuric sulfide, and easily releases elemental mercury if heated. Consequently, it can cause neurologic symptoms of mercury poisoning, and there are case reports in the literature of such occurrences.

CHAPTER THREE

Conclusion

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is thousands of years old and has changed little over the centuries. Its basic concept is that a vital force of life, called Qi, surges through the body. Any imbalance to Qi can cause disease and illness. This imbalance is most commonly thought to be caused by an alteration in the opposite and complementary forces that make up the Qi. These are called yin and yang.

Ancient Chinese believed that humans are microcosms of the larger surrounding universe, and are interconnected with nature and subject to its forces. Balance between health and disease is a key concept. TCM treatment seeks to restore this balance through treatment specific to the individual.

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It is believed that to regain balance, you must achieve the balance between the internal body organs and the external elements of earth, fire, water, wood, and metal

FOUR NATURES

The Four Natures are: hot (热; 熱), warm (温; 溫), cool (凉; 涼), cold (寒) or neutral (平), in terms of temperature. Hot and warm herbs are used to treat cold diseases, while cool and cold herbs are used to treat heat diseases.

WHAT TO EXPECT

During a typical appointment, a TCM practitioner would assess your overall health by taking a health history, doing a tongue assessment, pulse assessment, and a physical exam. The exam would identify any Imbalances or qi blockages.

If the practitioner identifies an imbalance in one of TCM's organ systems, it doesn't necessarily mean that the person has a physical disease in that organ.

The liver, for instance, helps to regulate the smooth flow of qi. If a person has "liver qi stagnation", the energy is said to be blocked, resulting in irritability, anger, or depression, a bitter taste in the mouth, indigestion, and a pulse that practitioners describe as "wiry".

A "kidney yin deficiency", on the other hand, is associated with a dry mouth,

"liver qi stagnation", the energy is said to be blocked, resulting in irritability, anger, or depression, a bitter taste in the mouth, indigestion, and a pulse that practitioners describe as "wiry".

A "kidney yin deficiency", on the other hand, is associated with a dry mouth, hot flushes in the afternoon or evening, tinnitus, and forgetfulness.⁵ The tongue is usually reddish in color with little or no tongue coating. Practitioners describe the pulse as "floating".

CHAPTER TWO

Raw materials

There are roughly 13,000 medicinals used in China and over 100,000 medicinal recipes recorded in the ancient literature. Plant elements and extracts are by far the most common elements used. In the classic Handbook of Traditional Drugs from 1941, 517 drugs were listed – out of these, only 45 were animal parts, and 30 were minerals. For many plants used as medicinals, detailed instructions have been handed down not only regarding the locations and areas where they grow best, but also regarding the best timing of planting and harvesting them.

Some animal parts used as medicinals can be considered rather strange such as animal gallstones

detailed instructions have been handed down not only regarding the locations and areas where they grow best, but also regarding the best timing of planting and harvesting them.

Some animal parts used as medicinals can be considered rather strange such as cows' gallstones.

Furthermore, the classic materia medica Bencao Gangmu describes the use of 35 traditional Chinese medicines derived from the human body, including bones, fingernail, hairs, dandruff, earwax, impurities on the teeth, feces, urine, sweat, and organs, but most are no longer in use.

PREPARATION

Decoction

Typically, one batch of medicinals is prepared as a decoction of about 9 to 18 substances. Some of these are considered as main herbs, some as ancillary herbs; within the ancillary herbs, up to three categories can be distinguished. Some ingredients are added in order to cancel out toxicity or side-effects of the main ingredients; on top of that, some medicinals require the use of other substances as catalysts.

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CHINESE PATENT MEDICINE

Chinese patent medicine (中成药; zhōngchéng yào) is a kind of traditional Chinese medicine. They are standardized herbal formulas. From ancient times, pills were formed by combining several herbs and other ingredients, which were dried and ground into a powder. They were then mixed with a binder and formed into pills by hand. The binder was traditionally honey. Modern teapills, however, are extracted in stainless steel extractors to create either a water decoction or water-alcohol decoction, depending on the herbs used. They are extracted at a low temperature (below 100 degrees Celsius) to preserve essential ingredients. The extracted liquid is then further condensed, and some raw herb powder from one of the herbal

extractors to create either a water decoction or water-alcohol decoction, depending on the herbs used. They are extracted at a low temperature (below 100 degrees Celsius) to preserve essential ingredients. The extracted liquid is then further condensed, and some raw herb powder from one of the herbal ingredients is mixed in to form an herbal dough. This dough is then machine cut into tiny pieces, a small amount of excipients are added for a smooth and consistent exterior, and they are spun into pills.

These medicines are not patented in the traditional sense of the word. No one has exclusive rights to the formula. Instead, "patent" refers to the standardization of the formula. In China, all Chinese patent medicines of the same name will have the same proportions of ingredients, and manufactured in accordance with the PRC Pharmacopoeia, which is mandated by law. However, in western countries there may be variations in the proportions of ingredients in patent medicines of the same name, and even different ingredients altogether.

Several producers of Chinese herbal medicines are pursuing FDA clinical trials to market their products as drugs in U.S. and European markets.

for regulators to blame the herb—and ban it, as several states have done—than address the more difficult challenge of fostering more intelligent use of Chinese medicines.

ACONITE (Fu Zi): Also called Wu Tou, Chan Wu or Cao Wu, this is a very important "hot" herb, found in many classical Chinese formulas. It is beneficial whenever someone has symptoms reflecting severe "cold" according to Chinese diagnosis. This includes certain types of arthritic pain.

Unfortunately, this root is also one of the most common causes of toxicity associated with Chinese herbs in the West. Raw aconite is very cardiotoxic and must be boiled for at least one hour before it can be used. Some case reports of toxicity may be due to improper preparation. Aconite also has a very narrow therapeutic window; the toxic dose is just a bit higher than the therapeutic dose.

Aconite can induce cardiac arrhythmias, which are sometimes fatal, as well as lightheadedness, blurred vision, nausea, numbness, and in extreme cases, stupor, dyspnea and incontinence. "This herb should be available by prescription of a qualified Chinese herbalist only. But it should not be banned

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ASTRAGALUS (Huang Qi): Widely promoted as an immune system builder, this herb in Chinese medicine is used to raise "Qi" or life energy, and move it from deep levels in the body out to the surface. While it can enhance athletic performance and increase immunity in some patients, it should not be used simplistically to "prevent colds" or other common ailments.

Astragalus can induce hypertension, agitation and insomnia, headache, tinnitus, dizziness and palpitations. Since it tends to push energy upward and outward, it can exacerbate rather than attenuate various types of pain including headache. Dr. Arnold said that it can also make acne worse.

LICORICE (Gan Cao): This is by far the most commonly used herb in Chinese medicine; owing to its sweetish nature, it is the proverbial "spoonful of sugar" to help other medicines go down. Licorice is used in small amounts in many classical formulas as a "harmonizer" to help other herbs work together and to attenuate potential adverse effects of some of the stronger herbs in a formula.

Chemically, licorice has a mineralocorticoid effect, not unlike aldosterone. It

TCM should not be used as a replacement for conventional or allopathic treatment, especially for serious conditions, but it may be beneficial when used as complementary therapy. Since some TCM herbal medicines can interfere or be toxic when combined with Western medicines, you should inform your doctor if you are using TCM.

ALLERGIES

Anxiety

Arthritis (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis)

Back pain

Depression

Diabetes

Eczema, hives, acne, psoriasis, and other skin conditions

Fertility

High blood pressure

Insomnia

EXCESSIVE, WARM, PASSIONATE, AND UNCLE SAM CONVICTIONS

Fertility

High blood pressure

Insomnia

Menopause symptoms

Obesity

Parkinson's disease

Although standard treatment in modern medicine is based on the diagnosis, in TCM, the treatment would depend on the underlying imbalance. For example, a person with insomnia may have difficulty sleeping because of an imbalance such as a kidney yin deficiency, spleen qi deficiency, or blood deficiency.

FIVE FLAVORS

The Five Phases, which correspond to the Five Flavors

The Five Flavors, sometimes also translated as Five Tastes, are: acrid/pungent (辛), sweet (甘), bitter (苦), sour (酸), and salty (咸; 鹹). Substances may also have more than one flavor, or none (i.e., a bland (淡) flavor). Each of the Five Flavors corresponds to one of the zàng organs, which in turn corresponds to one of the Five Phases: A flavor implies certain properties and presumed therapeutic "actions" of a substance: saltiness "drains downward and softens hard masses"; sweetness is "supplementing, harmonizing, and moistening"; pungent substances are thought to induce sweat and act on qi and blood; sourness tends to be astringent (涩; 澀) in nature; bitterness "drains heat, purges the bowels, and eliminates dampness".

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THE UNIQUE APPROACH

Rooted in a philosophy known as Taoism, traditional Chinese medicine is based on the theory that all of the body's organs mutually support each other. Therefore, in order to be healthy, an individual's organs (and their functions) must be in balance. This balance is attained, in part, by harmonizing yin and yang, two opposing but complementary energies thought to affect all life.

Another theory in traditional Chinese medicine is that vital energy (called "qi" or "chi") flows throughout the body via certain pathways (or "meridians"). According to this theory, disease and other emotional, mental, and physical health problems develop when the flow of qi is blocked, weak, or excessive. Restoring the flow of qi is considered essential to balancing the yin and yang and, in turn, achieving wellness.

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YIN AND YANG

The ancient Chinese proposed that every living thing is sustained by a balance of two opposing forces of energy, called Yin and Yang. Together, they make up the life essence, or Qi - a type of energy that flows through the body via invisible channels called meridians. Half of certain organs and meridians are governed by Yin and the other half by Yang. When Yin and Yang are out of balance in the body, this causes a blockage of Qi and a subsequent illness. Yin and Yang imbalances can be caused by stress, pollution, poor diet, emotional upsets or infection. For diagnostic purposes, Yin and Yang are further subdivided into interior and exterior, hot and cold, deficiency and excess.

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EFFICACY

Only a few trials exist that are considered to have adequate methodology by scientific standards. Proof of effectiveness is poorly documented or absent. A 2016 Cochrane review found "insufficient evidence that Chinese Herbal Medicines were any more or less effective than placebo or Hormonal Therapy" for the relief of menopause related symptoms. A 2012 Cochrane review found no difference in decreased mortality when Chinese herbs were used alongside Western medicine versus Western medicine exclusively. A 2010 Cochrane review found there is not enough robust evidence to support the effectiveness of traditional Chinese medicine herbs to stop the bleeding from haemorrhoids. A 2008 Cochrane review found promising evidence for the use of Chinese herbal medicine in relieving painful menstruation, compared to conventional medicine such as NSAIDs and the oral contraceptive pill but the findings are of low methodological quality. A 2012

the effectiveness of traditional Chinese medicine herbs to stop the bleeding from haemorrhoids. A 2008 Cochrane review found promising evidence for the use of Chinese herbal medicine in relieving painful menstruation, compared to conventional medicine such as NSAIDs and the oral contraceptive pill, but the findings are of low methodological quality. A 2012 Cochrane review found weak evidence suggesting that some Chinese medicinal herbs have a similar effect at preventing and treating influenza as antiviral medication. Due to the poor quality of these medical studies, there is insufficient evidence to support or dismiss the use of Chinese medicinal herbs for the treatment of influenza. There is a need for larger and higher quality randomized clinical trials to determine how effective Chinese herbal medicine is for treating people with influenza. A 2005 Cochrane review found that although the evidence was weak for the use of any single herb, there was low quality evidence that some Chinese medicinal herbs may be effective for the treatment of acute pancreatitis.

Successful results have been scarce: artemisinin is one of few examples. An effective treatment for malaria, it was derived from *Artemisia annua* which is traditionally used to treat fever. Chinese herbology is largely pseudoscience, with no valid mechanism of action for the majority of its treatments.

WHAT ARE HERBAL THERAPIES?

Herbal therapy, next to dietary therapy, is perhaps the most widely used Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) treatment modality. TCM relies on herbal therapies both for the treatment of illness and in the optimization of health and prevention of disease.

TCM assesses medicinal substances for their effects on particular vital substances, their resonance with particular zang fu organ systems, the channels of the jing luo system into which the substance is said to enter, and the pathogenic factors and patterns of disharmony that the substance is known to address.

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astription-promoting or securing and astringing

vomiting-inducing

substances for external application

CHAPTER ONE

What is Chinese medicine?

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is thousands of years old and has changed little over the centuries. Its basic concept is that a vital force of life, called Qi, surges through the body. Any imbalance to Qi can cause disease and illness. This imbalance is most commonly thought to be caused by an alteration in the opposite and complementary forces that make up the Qi. These are called yin and yang.

Ancient Chinese believed that humans are microcosms of the larger surrounding universe, and are interconnected with nature and subject to its forces. Balance between health and disease is a key concept. TCM treatment seeks to restore this balance through treatment specific to the individual.

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It is believed that to regain balance, you must achieve the balance between the internal body organs and the external elements of earth, fire, water, wood, and metal.

ADDITIONAL TREATMENT AND ADVICE

Your practitioner might advise you to make specific changes in your diet, such as avoiding spicy foods or alcohol. Foods are believed to either 'heat' or 'cool' the constitution, making dietary changes an important part of the healing process. Acupuncture might also be used to treat disrupted Qi.

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FUNCTION

Some herbs, like Fang Feng (*Radix Saphoshnikoviae*), literally 'prevent wind,' prevents or treats wind-related illnesses. Xu Duan (*Radix Dipsaci*), literally 'restore the broken,' effectively treats torn soft tissues and broken bones.

TAI CHI

Tai chi combines certain postures, gentle movements, mental focus, breathing, and relaxation. Research findings suggest that practicing tai chi may improve balance and stability in older people and those with Parkinson's disease, reduce pain from knee osteoarthritis, help people cope with fibromyalgia and back pain, and promote quality of life and improve mood in people with heart failure. For more information, see NCCIH's tai chi fact sheet.

TREATMENT TO REGAIN BALANCE MAY INVOLVE:

Acupuncture

Moxibustion (the burning of herbal leaves on or near the body)

Cupping (the use of warmed glass jars to create suction on certain points of the body)

Massage

Herbal remedies

Movement and concentration exercises (such as tai chi)

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Herbal remedies

Movement and concentration exercises (such as tai chi)

Acupuncture is a component of TCM commonly found in Western medicine and has received the most study of all the alternative therapies. Some herbal treatments used in TCM can act as medicines and be very effective but may also have serious side effects. In 2004, for example, the FDA banned the sale of dietary supplements containing ephedra and plants containing ephedra group alkaloids due to complications, such as heart attack and stroke. Ephedra is a Chinese herb used in dietary supplements for weight loss and performance enhancement. However, the ban does not apply to certain herbal products prepared under TCM guidelines intended only for short-term use rather than long-term dosing. It also does not apply to OTC and prescription drugs or to herbal teas.

If you are thinking of using TCM, a certified practitioner is your safest choice. The federally recognized Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (ACAOM) accredits schools that teach acupuncture and TCM. Many of the states that license acupuncture require graduation from an ACAOM-accredited school. The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine offers separate certification programs in acupuncture, Chinese herbology, and Oriental bodywork.

NOMENCLATURE

Many herbs earn their names from their unique physical appearance. Examples of such names include Niu Xi (*Radix cyathulae seu achyranthis*), "cow's knees," which has big joints that might look like cow knees; Bai Mu Er (*Fructificatio tremellae fuciformis*), white wood ear,' which is white and resembles an ear; Gou Ji (*Rhizoma cibotii*), 'dog spine,' which resembles the spine of a dog.[30]

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Many herbs indigenous to other countries have been incorporated into the Chinese materia medica. Xi Yang Shen (*Radix panacis quinquefolii*), imported from North American crops, translates as 'western ginseng,' while Dong Yang Shen (*Radix ginseng Japonica*), grown in and imported from North Asian countries, is 'eastern ginseng.'

TOXICITY

From the earliest records regarding the use of medicinals to today, the toxicity of certain substances has been described in all Chinese materia medica. Since TCM has become more popular in the Western world, there are increasing concerns about the potential toxicity of many traditional Chinese medicinals including plants, animal parts and minerals. For most medicinals, efficacy and toxicity testing are based on traditional knowledge rather than laboratory analysis. The toxicity in some cases could be confirmed by modern research (i.e., in scorpion); in some cases it could not (i.e., in Curculigo). Further, ingredients may have different names in different locales or in historical texts, and different preparations may have similar names for the same reason, which can create inconsistencies and confusion in the creation of medicinals, with the possible danger of poisoning. Edzard Ernst¹¹ concluded that adverse effects of herbal medicines are an important albeit

Curculigo). Further, ingredients may have different names in different locales or in historical texts, and different preparations may have similar names for the same reason, which can create inconsistencies and confusion in the creation of medicinals, with the possible danger of poisoning. Edzard Ernst "concluded that adverse effects of herbal medicines are an important albeit neglected subject in dermatology, which deserves further systematic investigation." Research suggests that the toxic heavy metals and undeclared drugs found in Chinese herbal medicines might be a serious health issue.

Substances known to be potentially dangerous include aconite, secretions from the Asiatic toad, powdered centipede, the Chinese beetle (*Mylabris phalerata*, Ban mao), and certain fungi. There are health problems associated with *Aristolochia*. Toxic effects are also frequent with *Aconitum*. To avoid its toxic adverse effects *Xanthium sibiricum* must be processed. Hepatotoxicity has been reported with products containing *Reynoutria multiflora* (synonym *Polygonum multiflorum*), *glycyrrhizin*, *Senecio* and *Symphytum*. The evidence suggests that hepatotoxic herbs also include *Dictamnus dasycarpus*, *Astragalus membranaceus*, and *Paeonia lactiflora*; although there is no evidence that they cause liver damage. Contrary to popular belief, *Ganoderma lucidum* mushroom extract, as an adjuvant for cancer immunotherapy, appears to have the potential for toxicity.

Also, adulteration of some herbal medicine preparations with conventional drugs which may cause serious adverse effects, such as corticosteroids,

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Herbs can act on the body as powerfully as pharmaceutical drugs and should be treated with the same caution and respect. Some herbs can be toxic in high doses, while others can cause allergic reactions. Make sure your practitioner is fully qualified. Never abandon your regular medication or alter the dose without the knowledge and approval of your doctor.

INTRODUCTION

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CATEGORIZATION

There are several different methods to classify traditional Chinese medicinals:

The Four Natures

The Five Flavors

The meridians

The specific function.

COLOR

Color is not only a valuable means of identifying herbs, but in many cases also provides information about the therapeutic attributes of the herb. For example, yellow herbs are referred to as huang (yellow) or jin (gold). Huang Bai (Cortex Phellodendri) means 'yellow fir,' and Jin Yin Hua (Flos Lonicerae) has the label 'golden silver flower.'

exercise program.

Chinese pharmacopoeia

Chapter two

Raw materials

Preparation

Decoction

Chinese patent medicine

Chinese herbal extracts

Categorization

The Four Natures

The Five Flavors

The meridians

The specific function.

Four Natures

Five Flavors

Specific function

Nomenclature

Color

1. INTRODUCTION

Five Flavors

Specific function

Nomenclature

Color

Smell and taste

Geographic location

Function

Country of origin

Toxicity

Efficacy

Ecological impacts

Herbs in use

Chinese ginseng

Chapter three

Conclusion

DRIED CHINESE HERBS

Traditional Chinese medicine is a healing approach that originated in China thousands of years ago. Often referred to as "TCM," practitioners use herbs, diet, acupuncture, cupping, and qigong to prevent or treat health problems.

Although it is still practiced in many of China's medical facilities alongside modern medicine, in the United States, traditional Chinese medicine is considered a form of alternative medicine.

TREATMENT METHODS

There are many different therapeutic methods used in traditional Chinese medicine, the most popular being acupuncture. Since traditional Chinese medicine emphasizes individualized treatment, healing methods vary widely from patient to patient. These methods often include:

Acupuncture: Though acupuncture's roots lie in TCM, it is used as a western treatment for a variety of health concerns.

Acupressure: Finger pressure is applied over acupuncture points and meridians.

Cupping therapy

Diet and nutrition: Foods are thought to have warming/cooling properties and are said to have energetic healing properties

meridians.

Cupping therapy

Diet and nutrition: Foods are thought to have warming/cooling properties and are said to have specific healing properties.

Herbal medicine: Herbs and herbal tea may be suggested.

Moxibustion: A practice that involves burning an herb near the skin to warm the area over acupuncture points.

Tuina: a type of bodywork that combines massage and acupressure.

Exercises such as tai chi and qi gong

phenylbutazone, phenytoin, and glibenclamide, has been reported.

However, many adverse reactions are due to misuse or abuse of Chinese medicine. For example, the misuse of the dietary supplement Ephedra (containing ephedrine) can lead to adverse events including gastrointestinal problems as well as sudden death from cardiomyopathy. Products adulterated with pharmaceuticals for weight loss or erectile dysfunction are one of the main concerns. Chinese herbal medicine has been a major cause of acute liver failure in China.

Most Chinese herbs are safe but some have shown not to be. Reports have shown products being contaminated with drugs, toxins, or false reporting of ingredients. Some herbs used in TCM may also react with drugs, have side effects, or be dangerous to people with certain medical conditions.

SMELL AND TASTE

Unique flavors define specific names for some substances. Gan means 'sweet,' so Gan Cao (Radix glycyrrhizae) is 'sweet herb,' an adequate description for the licorice root. "Ku" means bitter, thus Ku Shen (Sophorae flavescens) translates as 'bitter herb.'

