

Chinese herbal medicine has been used for thousand of years. In my private practice of Acupuncture and Chiropractic, I have prescribed various herbs in their raw form along with acupuncture therapy to treat various illnesses. To understand how the herbs work, it is imperative to grasp the concept of qi (also referred to as chi in Chinese or ki in Korean).

Heal Thyself Why Herbal Remedies Work

By Dr. Man Tran

CONCEPT OF QI

In traditional Chinese medicine, qi denotes two aspects of health. First, it is the essential substance of the human body in maintaining vital activities that keeps one alive. Secondly, it aids with the functional activities of the organs and tissues in the body. An abundance of qi and its movement is the basis of good health while weak qi may lead to illnesses and diseases. Weakness of qi can be seen in people who are frail, feeling weak and low in energy, poor appetite, softened voice, lacking motivation, and are easily prone to catch cold, flu or fever. All of these symptoms are associated with the disorder of various qi in the body.

FORMS OF QI

Qi can be classified as congenital or acquired. The former is passed down from the parents to the fetus. This form of qi is known as "Yuan Qi" or original qi and is located in the kidneys at the lower abdomen. It is the foundation for the growth and development of an individual. For this reason, it is important for a mother to have good health, proper nutrition and be free of stress, whether it is emotional or physical, during her pregnancy. Individuals having low congenital constitution will usually be frail in stature, being sick quite often during their lifetime.

There are four forms of acquired qi that allow an individual to control qi development. They are specific to the spleen and lung organs. In the abdomen, the spleen extracts food in forming a qi known as "Gu Qi" or food qi. This qi is then transported up to the chest where the lungs reside. The qi from the food combines with the air inhaled from the lungs to form another type of qi called "Zong Qi" or pectoral qi. This controls respiration and the strength of the voice. A strong "Zong Qi" is exhibited through a tense and deep "kiap" or

yell during martial arts training. The pectoral qi is further refined into "Ying Qi" or nutrient qi, and "Wei Qi" or protective qi. The nutrient qi provides nourishment for the entire body system including the original qi in the kidneys. Through this process, one can strengthen the quality of the congenital qi. The protective qi functions to protect the musculature surface. This protection prevents one from catching a cold during winter season and is quite analogous to the immune system.

Although born with predisposed quantity of qi from our parents, people can develop a stronger qi qualitatively through practice of good diet and proper breathing exercises such as Tai Chi and Qi Gong. In traditional Chinese medicine, there are numerous herbs that can "jump start" the process of building or strengthening the qi in the body. For the purpose of the discussion, I have listed the herbs most commonly prescribed in my practice. These herbs are divided into two categories: Qi Regulator and Qi Tonify. Since the kidneys, spleen and lungs are the main organs contributing to the production of qi, these herbs enter these associated channels or meridians.

HERBS THAT REGULATE QI

These herbs help to move the qi, especially of the spleen and lung. The stagnant qi is an impediment or malfunction in the activity of the tissues, which often produces pain.



Chinese Pinyin
Chen Pi
English
Tangerine Peel
Botanical
Citrus Reticulate



Need

Chinese Pinyin
Mu Xiang
English
Costus Root
Botanical
Aucklandia
Lappa



Chinese Pinyin
Wu Yao
English
Linden Root
Botanical
Lindera
Strychnifolia



Chinese Pinyin
Da Fu Pi
English
Betel Husk
Botanical
Areca catechu

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HERBS THAT TONIFY QI

These herbs help strengthen the qi of the body, specifically the qi in the spleen, lungs and kidneys. In addition, they also strengthen the body's defense against disease. As a result, the herbs assist in the recovery of patients with chronic illness or degenerative disorders. When using these herbs, it is important to combine them with Qi Regulator herbs to enhance the effectiveness.



Chinese Pinyin
Ren Shen
English
Ginseng Root
Botanical
Panax ginseng



Chinese Pinyin
Huang Qi
English
Astragalus
Botanical
Astragalus
Membranaceus



Chinese Pinyin
Da Zao
English
Chinese Date
Botanical
Ziziphus Jujube



Chinese Pinyin
Dang Shen
English
Codonopsis Root
Botanical
Codonopsis
Pilosula



Chinese Pinyin
Ren Shen
English
Ginseng Root
Botanical
Panax ginseng



Chinese Pinyin
Gan Cao
English
Licorice Root
Botanical
Gycerrhiza
Uralensis



Chinese Pinyin
Tai Zi Shen
English
Pseudostellaria
Botanical
Pseudostellaria
Heterophylla



Chinese Pinyin
Shan Yao
English
Atractylodes
Rhizome
Botanical
Atractylodes
Macrocephala



Chinese Pinyin
Huang Jing
English
Polygonatum
Botanical
Polygonatum
Sibiricum

HERBS UTILIZATION

Although the herbs listed have the property to strengthen the qi, each one should not be use inclusively. It is more effective and safe to take them in combination with other herbs. In order to have the proper herbal prescription, which includes the ingredients and dosage, it is advisable to consult an acupuncturist or Chinese herbalist since the conditions of every individual are different and unique. **700**