

Chinese Kitchen Table Medicine

All cultures have their kitchen table medicine --their soups and salves, potions, prescriptions, and tender touches that ease the bumps through life. Every culture has its shaman and surgeon, but more importantly its grandmother who makes a rising fever vanish, or uncle who knows how to disappear pain, or calm a tidal wave of nausea. This eBook serves as a practical guide to using some of the natural healing methods of the Middle Kingdom. All are time tested safe remedies and methods that have been passed down through the centuries across the kitchen tables of families and friends caring for one another.

This small eBook is just one shiny stone from the treasure house of Chinese medicine. The practice and accumulated wisdom of these natural healing methods goes both long and deep, and at the end of this book you will find a list of resources to take you further on that journey should you wish.

At Yong Kang Clinic in St. Louis, Missouri we also are a resource and partner in helping you to use this ancient medicine in these modern times. Please don't hesitate to call should you have questions. We are here to be of service.

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The essential guide to DIY Chinese medicine

A few thoughts from the writer

One of the things I most dearly loved about living in Taiwan were the multitudinous storefront herb shops and Chinese medicine clinics. You could not transverse more than a few scooter-littered blocks of sidewalk without passing one of these. In Taiwan, there are no doctor's appointments. Instead you walk in, take a number and gossip with the rest of the crowd while you wait to see the doc. Getting medical care there is affordable, fast and convenient.

In both Taiwan and China and you will find a vast selection of "everyday" Chinese medicine books written for the general public. While Asia does have its share of "rockstar-grade" Chinese medicine doctors, the medicine of China is one of the foundations of the culture. Everyone knows a bit about how to use it stay healthy or treat the illnesses, bumps and bruises of everyday life. For me this is one of the beauties of Chinese medicine. It is readily accessible by anyone who possesses a sense of curiosity and has a modicum of observational skills. Best of all, many of the methods and herbal formulations have withstood the tests of time. They have been used successfully by concerned parents to treat their children, and thus are treasures passed from one generation to another.

Yes, I love the way Chinese medicine in Asia is readily accessible, which is why I have passed this little book along to you!

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Michael Max, L.Ac

Let's begin...

Welcome to Yong Kang Clinic's plain English introduction to the simple use of Chinese medicine in everyday life.

All the methods and prescriptions introduced in this eBook have been used over countless decades by the Chinese to promote health and treat illness. More importantly all have been used in my clinic and by my patients I've seen the positive effect on people's lives. It's some good stuff! That being said, if you have a serious medical condition please do find yourself a qualified practitioner who can help you.

The contents of this eBook are a compilation of home remedies and common-sense Chinese methods. They may at first (or even second) blush seem strange or downright weird. Sorry, there is no getting around that. It is after all CHINESE medicine and thus involves some ways of thinking for which we in the West simply don't have map. So lace up those adventure boots, grab the compass of your intuitive understanding and life experience and let's explore together the practical power of Chinese medicine in everyday life!

開始



Change is the only constant in this world

The medicine in your kitchen

There is a saying in Chinese medicine 以食物為藥. It translates as “let your food be your medicine.” It goes without saying that a healthy and nutritious diet is a cornerstone of vibrant health. What the Chinese have discovered through the generations and dynasties is that certain common foodstuffs and spices can have a therapeutic effect when prepared in certain ways and taken at specific times.

If you have read through any kind of book on the medicinal use of herbs you undoubtedly came across a wide range of uses for any one particular herb; some of which probably did not make sense. Or maybe you tried one or two but they failed to provide relieve. What usually gets left out of these descriptions is WHEN you should use the herb. Timing is often important. For example, consider the use of cinnamon to improve the circulatory system. It should be taken in small amounts daily for years (much like some people take a baby aspirin), not when you are on the verge of a heart attack. Same is true for using ginger to cure a cold. It needs to be taken at the early stage when you first feel that “oh, I might be getting sick” metallic sensation in your nose; not after your symptoms are in full swing.

Much like the stock market, humor, or knowing when to steal a first kiss, timing is everything!

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Medicine need not be an overcomplicated affair

The remarkable power of ginger

Chasing the common cold

When you start to notice the “cold” type cold; the one with symptoms of a headache, stiff neck, chills with an inability to get warm and a lack of sweating, you can use this home remedy to beat it. Warning: Unlike western medications that people take to cover up symptoms so they can “keep going,” this method requires a bit of rest so your body can marshal its resources and kick that darned pathogen out of your system. One afternoon or evening of downtime verses a week or more of discomfort? Do the math for yourself.

Ginger, cinnamon and brown sugar -- Who said all Chinese medicine tastes bad?

If you don't have these in your kitchen, you can pick them up at the local grocery store. Here is what you need:

Fresh ginger root

Powdered cinnamon

Brown sugar

Put 3 cups of water into a sauce pan.

Thinly slice (about as thin as a quarter) 1.5-2 inches of fresh ginger

One teaspoon of powdered cinnamon

Add 1 to 1.5 tablespoons of brown sugar

Put the ginger, cinnamon and brown sugar in the pan with the water. Bring to a light boil then turn down and simmer for 15-20 minutes.

Pour a cupful of the ginger/cinnamon tea. Crawl under some covers (you might already be there if your chills have really kicked in). Drink down a cup of this tea and take a little nap. The idea here is to get a nice light sweat going. Not a drenching water-spilling-out-of-your-pores sweat, but a light therapeutic sweat. If one cup of the tea does not do the trick, take another cup a few hours later. Sometimes it helps to eat a bit of oatmeal with the tea. By all means avoid greasy foods or meats.

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You can beat a cold in the early stages if you sweat it out

The remarkable power of ginger

After the sweat, the chills should be gone, the headache much improved or gone, and a general sense that you are well on the road to recovery. If caught early on in the process, you should be back to normal on the next day.

Menstrual discomfort

Chinese women are serious about avoiding cold during the menses. Be it not swimming in cold water, putting the ice cream on hold for five days, or cozying up to a hot water bottle, they do everything they can to insure their belly stays nice and warm. There is a logic to this and the proof that warmth eases menstrual pain is borne out by the fact that women of all cultures often turn to heat to ease their achy tummy. I've yet in my years of clinical practice heard of a woman icing her abdomen to stop menstrual pain.

Here again the use of ginger tea can bring about significant relief. In this case you want to make a weaker version of the tea. And instead of adding cinnamon, a slice of Dang Gui (Angelica sinensis), or Bai Shao (white peony root) adds to the analgesic effect.

Nausea, morning sickness or food poisoning

Again, take ginger tea straight up. Or if you like the bubbly goodness of carbonation to help settle the stomach then brew the tea strong and add some club soda.

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Ginger is of great benefit to the digestion

The quiet warmth of cinnamon

Cinnamon is more than a delicious spice that gives your latte a flavorful zing and transforms the morning oatmeal from wallpaper glue into something downright tasty. Cinnamon also improves blood circulation, helps to regulate the immune system of those who are prone to sweating easily and have a sensitivity to drafts, warms up the extreme ties of those with cold fingers and toes and helps to relieve insomnia for people who tend toward anxiety and gastric reflux.

Cinnamomi Cortex and Cinnamomi Ramulus, the branch and bark of the cinnamon tree are used in a wide variety of Chinese medicine formulas and, of course, it is a commonly used spice here in the West. Adding a bit of cinnamon to coffee, tea or cooking is a good way to access its blood invigorating effect. And for anyone that dislikes cold drafts and easily feels chilled, getting more cinnamon into your diet can help to warm you up.

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Cinnamon is a common ingredient in many Chinese medicine formulas

Cooking with food grade medicinals

Chinese herbs are not used only in the foul, but therapeutic brews prescribed by your Chinese medicine practitioner. They are also a part of the daily diet of China. Many of these medicinals are “food grade” herbs, meaning they are commonly used in soups, stews, congees and other cooking. Most are mild in taste, not only do they add an exotic flavor to your cooking; they also help to build your blood, strengthen your immune system and improve digestion.

Should you happen to frequent the Asian food markets where you live, you can pick up these safe age-old food-like herbs that are commonly added to soups and stews in China:

Astragalus (huang qi)

This herb boosts the immune system, improves energy and aids digestion. It can also be helpful for those who are borderline diabetic.

Angelicae sinensis (dang gui)

This is the premier blood building herb in the Chinese pharmacy. In Taiwan women drink it like soda pop after their period to tonify their blood. Also, this is added to all the blood building soups that are given to women in the first month after childbirth. It helps to treat dry skin, and is a key medicinal in regulating menstruation.

American ginseng (xi yang shen)

While the Asian varieties of ginseng can cause insomnia and agitation in certain people, American ginseng, due to its mild nature, gently tonifies the immune system and gives a bit of an energy boost. Add it to soups and stews, or grind it up and add it to oatmeal in the morning.

以藥為食物



Cooking with food grade medicinals

Goji Berries (gou qi zi)

There is always a new “superfood” being marketed these days. Lycii Fruit is one of the new superstars in that realm. I cannot vouch for its superfood status, but I do know it builds blood and has anti-oxidant properties. It is a raisony sort of berry that you can add it to oatmeal or pies, or just chew it as a snack. People in southern China like to toss a few berries into their green tea and sip it throughout the day.

Black sesame seeds (hei zhi ma)

You can use them whole in all kinds of cooking, such as baking, stir-fries, porridges and oatmeal. Get the ground up powder for your oatmeal. It tastes great, adds fiber and calcium to your diet, and keeps your bowels moving smoothly.

Chinese Rehmanniae (shu di huang)

Another blood builder, this adds a rich tangy flavor to soups, improves the quality of the hair and nails and is good for anyone bordering on anemia.

以藥為食物



Always buy the high grade herbs for your cooking

The seemingly common cold

感冒

Is it a “cold”, or a “heat?”

Chinese medicine has effectively treated infectious illness since the late Han dynasty. It was during that time of war, famine and social upheaval (along with its attendant increase in illness) that a rather sharp scholar and doctor name Zhang Zhong-Jing compiled a book titled *The Discussion of Damage by Cold*. Back in those days there were no antibiotics or anti-viral medications. If someone got seriously ill they were usually done for, and Zhang had plenty of opportunity to treat a wide range of patients with everything from the very beginnings of the common cold to cholera, nephritis and pneumonia. Most of the book is dedicated to how to treat people when they first get sick because if you can prevent an illness from getting worse, or causing more serious life threatening complications, then patient’s natural immunity and vitality will quickly put them back on the road to health. Since Zhang’s time other theories and treatment procedures have been developed, however most of them stem from the Discussion of Damage by Cold. The treatment methods in this book not only are helpful for acute illness, but can also be applied to certain kinds of chronic problems as well.

The first thing to determine is if you have “cold” or have “heat.”

Those with “heat” find that their illness comes on very fast. You could feel a bit like you are getting sick and then WHAM a few hours later you are in bed with a high fever, sore throat, sweating and agitation. Heat type illness will knock you down faster than a Cardinals fan grabbing for World Series tickets. It generally begins with a sore throat, sweating and measurable fever.

Cold on the other hand moves much more slowly. Those with a “cold” illness might find they feel a bit run down, but it might be a day or two before it “catches up with them” and they find themselves in bed. These people feel cold. They are chilled and bothered by drafts. In mild cases putting on extra clothes can help. But, for those with a strong dose of “cold” getting under three down comforters will still not get them warm. Those with “cold” for the most part do not sweat and the back of their head feels achy and painful.



There are “hot” and “cold” varieties of the common cold

The seemingly common cold

感冒

What to do?

The good news, especially for those suffering from the “cold” type of cold, is that getting treatment right away can often result in beating it, or at least having a milder case. The same is true for the “heat” type of illness, but you have a much smaller window of opportunity to act, it as this kind of illness moves quickly.

For the “cold” type colds, the ginger and cinnamon tea is the formula to use.

For those “hot” type colds Yin Qiao San is the key to the lock.



Lingering colds are a sign of depletion

Chinese first aid kit

Just as we keep **Band-Aids, topical antiseptics, aspirin** and antibiotic salve in our medicine cabinet, so too there are a number of safe and effective “patent” Chinese medicines that are well worth having around. This eBook will teach you the basics of when to use these medicines.

Chinese medicines are safe when prescribed and used correctly. All the medicinals in this handbook have a long history of safe usage. We have certain over-the-counter medicines in the West that if abused or used incorrectly, not only result in less than optimal treatment, but certain problems may be exacerbated. So it is with these Chinese medicines. If you have questions or concerns be sure to find a qualified professional to help you find and use the herbal preparation that is right for you.

Another justifiable concern is that of purity. Let's face it: the Chinese are not exactly famous for their obsessive pursuit of quality. Fortunately there are a number of ways of making sure the Chinese herbal formulas that you take are safe and pure. First read the label. Products that are made in Taiwan by and large are safe, as their manufacturing and regulatory processes are more advanced. Second, quality American companies that source their manufacturing from China import trustworthy products as they pay increased attention to quality control. They usually cost more, but are worth it.

As your local drugstore probably does not stock these medicinals, it is best to lay in a supply of them. That way they will be there when you need them.

Again, if you have questions, contact a qualified practitioner of Chinese medicine or give us a call a Yong Kang Clinic!

家庭應急藥



Rule of thumb, if the label is full of Chinglish, don't buy it

Bao He Wan, Chinese Pepto-Bismol

During the holiday season, or when celebrating life's transitions, passages and joy it is not unusual to wind up with an "I can't believe I ate the whole thing" feeling of discomfort from bellying up to the trough of gastrolicious delights. We all know the feeling of giving in -- way in -- to the tasty delights of celebration, with its attendant bloating and dyspepsia. Like all cultures the Chinese have come up with their own time-tested medicines that treat gastric over-indulgence.

Bao He Wan is the herbal formula that helps to unclog your digestion in a gentle, effective way. Unlike some formulas that are purgative in nature and simply blast your overindulgence through the intestinal tract, Bao He Wan acts to strengthen the digestion as it gives a gentle nudge to that last piece of pie.

In addition to resolving your overindulgence, Bao He Wan is also helpful in treating a sour-feeling stomach, acid reflux, acute vomiting and diarrhea from the flu, morning sickness, chronic cholecystitis, and bad breath.

This formula is safe for both adults and children. It deserves a place in your home's first-aid medicine cabinet!

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It is best to eat until you are 80% full.

Curing Pills, the fizzless Alka-Selzer

While Bao He Wan is the premier prescription for dealing with the bloating and stagnation that come from overeating, Kang Ning Wan (aka: Curing Pills) is the formula to turn to for flu's and food poisoning.

While both formulas are helpful for overall digestive discomfort due to bloating, acid reflux, gas, and a general feeling of malaise. Kang Ning Wan is particularly useful in relieving nausea and stopping vomiting. It helps to detoxify as well as promote peristalsis, and is great at getting rid of accumulated phlegm in the digestive tract.

This is THE formula to pack into your travel kit when you are lighting out for territories ahead that have questionable sanitation practices. It is also worth keeping a bottle in your purse, glove box, or drawer at work.

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Do not leave home without your Curing Pills

San Huang San, three yellow iceless wonder

The Chinese martial arts know a lot about medicine. A sinew-popping kick to one of the joints, punches that powder capillary beds, or broken and shattered bones from falls or weapons are common fare. All that whirling-kick and punch-training can result in some serious injuries to the soft tissues, ligaments, sinews and bones as well. The Chinese figured out long ago how to fight with style and power, and they also learned a lot about putting people back together.

Many of the training temples have herbal formulas and liniments passed down through generations that treat bruises, bleeding, soft tissue injury and broken bones. The vast majority of these methods involve increasing blood flow, reducing inflammation, and promoting the generation of new tissue.

One substance we commonly use in the West to treat trauma and the associated swelling and pain that comes along with it is never used by the Chinese -- ice. There is a good reason!

What? But, 10 doctors out of 10 recommend ice for trauma.

True enough, but do consider that at one time everyone thought the sun revolved around the earth, cigarettes were good for you, and tomatoes were poisonous. There are times we think something is in our best interest, only to later discover we were missing an essential bit of information.

Ice will temporarily help a traumatic injury to feel better as it numbs the pain, but in the long run we are prolonging the healing process as ice reduces circulation to the injured area.

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Use this for sprains, bruises and other trauma

San Huang San, three yellow iceless wonder

Ever notice we use ice to preserve dead things?

Fish at the supermarket are laid out on a bed of ice; we pack our picnic sandwiches in a cooler with ice to slow down the process of spoilage. Want to slow down a metabolic process? Add cold.

Generally speaking, warm, living creatures don't particularly like ice. That would include the cells in the area of the trauma, as well as the blood and lymph that circulate through the injured area.

Think about it like this: When there is a disaster of some sort that results in destruction and chaos, emergency supplies and materials need to get through. Then debris and damaged materials need to be transported out. It is vitally important to have open roadways for this to occur. Our bodies are just the same. We need white blood cells getting to the scene of the damage as quickly as possible, we need good blood circulation to bring in nutrients, and lymph drainage to carry away the debris.

Slap an ice pack on a sprain or contusion, and the process of recovery slowwwss wayyyy doowwnnnn.

OK, fine, but what kind of first aid should be applied?

Kung fu first aid, the kind those Shaolin monks use, would be the local application of herbal plasters or ointments, ingested herbs that increase blood circulation, and some acupuncture. All this would happen, ideally, as soon as possible after the injury has occurred.

Your local drug store (unless you happen to be living in Taipei) is not going to carry Kung fu first aid materials, so you either need to roll your own, or visit us at Yong Kang Clinic to get some. Fortunately, you can make this amazing ointment yourself.

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Ice is for dead things!

San Huang San, three yellow iceless wonder

First you need to acquire the herbs, which you can do through any reputable Chinese herb dealer.

Here's the recipe:

Da Huang (Rhubarb)
Huang Qin (Skullcap Root)
Huang Bai (Phellodendron Bark)
Pu Gong Ying (Dandelion)
Zhi Zi (Gardenia)
Hong Hua (Safflower)

Take 15 grams of each and grind them into a very fine powder. Then mix into a medium such as petrolatum (Vaseline). You can use a sesame oil and beeswax medium if you don't like Vaseline. There are also non-petroleum jellies similar to Vaseline that also work just fine.

Mix this stuff up before you need it, because when you are dealing with a sprained ankle or busted up elbow you really don't want to be mucking around with having to mix it up in the midst of trauma. You just want to grab a jar of it and smear it on so it can go to work to reduce the swelling and provide you with some pain relief!

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Use San Huang San instead of applying ice

Yin Qiao San, the "hot" cold solution

Earlier we discussed "cold" colds, and "hot" colds. The "hot" variety often starts off as a sore or swollen throat and a feeling of being a bit feverish. (The "cold" type colds usually begin with a chill and an aversion to cold.) Yin Qiao San, while often thought of by many as a great all-purpose cold medication is in fact for the "hot" type colds.

Please understand that Chinese medicines can work extremely fast and effectively, but only if you use the appropriate herbs for the condition being treated.

Say this with me again:

Yin Qiao San for "hot" colds

Ginger and Cinnamon for "cold" colds

Remember, both Yin Qiao San and the ginger tea are not about masking cold symptoms, but about shifting the body's immune and healing systems to actively fight the pathogen. So you want to be sure you are bringing the right tools into play here.

One other thing about colds. You already know this, but it bears repeating. If you actually take off a day or two to rest and give your body an opportunity to rid itself of the viral invader, you will usually recover much faster and without complications. Do the math!

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"Hot" colds move faster than an express train, treat them quickly

Xiao Yao San, when you have your tail in a knot

From time to time everyone needs a chill pill. Something to take the edge off the anxiety that floats trapped within the ribcage. Something to quiet the mind as we race from one scenario of doom to another. Something to give us a little bit of space to breath and remember that life generally finds a way to sort itself out, and most of our worries and running do nothing to help unfold the process. Something to take the edge off a stewing untargeted anger.

Anxiety is a multibillion-dollar industry, and the Chinese pharmacy has a number of formulas that help to calm without sedating. Xiao Yao San, Relaxed Wander is a classic for taking off the edge of anxiety and frustration, but without the side effects associated many of the pharmaceutical SSI uptake inhibitors. So you get to keep your sex drive and also have access to a wider range of feelings.

Xiao Yao San is especially helpful for women who have delayed or painful menstruation and for those who recognize there is a connection between their emotions and digestive difficulties.

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Due to impermanence, all things are possible!

Yunnan Baiyao, stops bleeding and promotes healing

This is another herbal preparation that is helpful in the treatment of trauma. It both helps to stop bleeding and at the same time improve blood circulation.

Contradiction? Welcome to Chinese medicine!

Yunnan Baiyao is a “lineage” formula, meaning it was a family prescription passed down over the years from parent to child, or perhaps to a worthy student. Modern legend has it that Mr. Qu, the holder of the Yunnan Baiyao formula “gifted” it to the Chinese government some years ago, and thus it is now manufactured and available to all.

Regardless of these business details, Yunnan Baiyao is one seriously effective medicine in stopping bleeding, whether the bleeding is due to trauma, an ulcerated stomach, laceration, surgery, or a menstrual cycle gone awry.

The primary herb in this formula is San Qi (Notoginseng Radix), this is an herb that in the past soldiers would carry on their person and not trade even for gold, as its blood stanching life savings effects were priceless.

Use Yunnan Baiyao to stop the bleeding of a cut. Yes, it is a bit uncomfortable to push a bit of powder into a laceration, but it will quickly stop the bleeding, reduce pain and vigorously promote the healing of flesh. This medicinal is helpful for sports injuries and trauma as it improves the circulation through the area of injury. For trauma take the red pill that is wrapped in cotton at the top of the bottle, and take a half capful a couple times a day internally. (And remember to smear San Huang San on swollen and pain area!) Yunnan Baiyao is helpful when taken internally to staunch uterine bleeding, bleeding from stomach ulcers, and it assists in promoting healing after surgery. That being said, these latter kinds of problems almost always have a complex etiology and you should not rely on this formula alone for these conditions. **Seeking the help of a qualified practitioner is advised.**

Contraindications: This medicinal should NOT be taken internally by pregnant women.

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Heals cut flesh with incredible speed

10 Things you may not know about Chinese Medicine

1. Acupuncture is not just for treating pain.
2. You don't have to believe in it for it to work. For that matter, the practitioner does not even need to believe in it for it to work. They just need to know how to apply the technology.
3. Anxiety or depression are not simply psychological issues.
4. There are no magic cure -- but, sometimes it feels that way.
5. It is common to feel profoundly relaxed after an acupuncture treatment.
6. No, you don't have to be Chinese to practice Chinese medicine.
7. Yes, those herbs do taste as bad as you have heard they do.
8. You don't have to know how to read or speak Chinese to practice acupuncture. But, it does help.
9. It is excellent for treating chronic conditions, but also good at preventing them in the first place. So, get right into your acupuncturist after that car accident!
10. It makes you look ten years younger, raises your IQ, immunizes you against parking tickets, and makes you more attractive to the opposite sex.

中醫的奧妙



Breath, release.....repeat

DIY Acupressure

My intent here is to teach you how to use your hands in the same way that I think with needles. You already know the human body is electrically wired and mechanically connected via sinews, bones and muscle. We have hormonal, chemical, electrical and mechanical signaling systems that facilitate the communication between organs, provide nourishment throughout the body, and filter out and dispose of waste and toxins. We also have, for lack a better word, an energetic system, a system that channels and utilizes the force of life itself. This system has been charted by the ancient Chinese as the meridians and the places of influential along them that we call acu-points. You can use anything from a needle, to a chopstick, to a laser, to your finger to affect the flow of life energy through these peculiar and influence pathways.

Don't take my word for it.

Try these for yourself and be amazed at the hidden healing mechanism that is built into each and every one of us!

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Acupuncture is not a mystery, it is science. Chinese science

Off channel points for the treatment of low back pain

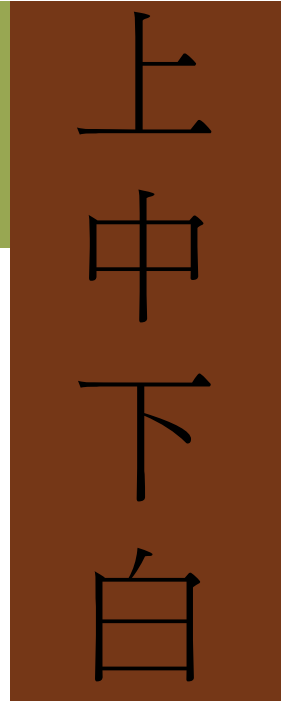
Generally speaking, the vast majority of acupuncture points are found along the pathway of the acupuncture meridians, but there are a number of points that are found “off channel.” The Tong Tradition* points of Middle White, Lower White and Upper White are excellent for treating problems associated with the lower back.

These points are useful in the treatment of back pain, sciatica and hip pain. Basically, they are not so much “points” as they are areas of influence. Press along the area between Middle and Lower White (located in between the metacarpals of the little and ring finger) looking for areas that either feel tender to the touch, or feel “crunchy”. Then explore the area around Upper White, which is located in between the heads of the metacarpals of the middle and index finger, as well as the area up to an inch below.

The areas that are reactive tend to treat pain the best.

To treat yourself, simply find the sore spots and press with your thumb, the end of a chopstick, or the eraser end of a pencil. Especially for acute back pain, stimulating these sensitive areas while gently rotating your hips can bring a lot of relief quickly. Likewise, for sciatic pain that is made worse by sitting, massaging these areas on the back of your hand can reduce the discomfort caused by sitting.

** Tung style acupuncture is a lineage Taiwanese tradition of acupuncture. It varies quite widely from the forms of acupuncture usually employed in Mainland China and most often taught in Western schools. I first ran into this method when living in Taiwan and it has been part of my personal study ever since.*



These points are especially effective for acute back pain

Wind Pool, Gallbladder 20

風池

You already know this point. Intuitively your fingers gravitate here when you have a headache, your neck feels stiff, or your stress level has climbed into the orange zone. This point is excellent for relieving neck pain, treating headaches, treating colds and fevers and bringing about a deep sense of relaxation and wellbeing.

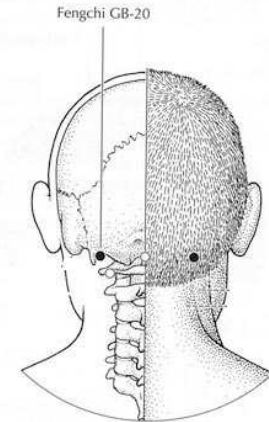
“Wind Pool” is found in the corner where the large muscles in the back of the neck meet up with the occipital bone. Again, you probably already know where it is, as it is in the place that is tender to the touch and loves to be massaged when your neck feels stiff, or when you are just tired and slightly headachy.

How to use “wind pool” at home

There are a number of ways to stimulate this point without the use of needles. First of course, is massage. You can rub this point yourself, or do it for your partner or spouse. The other way to stimulate this point is through the use of heat therapy. Get one of those beanbag pillows that come in all kinds of shapes and sizes and are filled with either rice or flaxseed. Give it a quick zap in the microwave and then tuck it up under your cranium. If you are prone to colds, or one of those “I can’t get warm” types of people, this kind of treatment not only feels great, but will help to regulate your system so you don’t feel so cold.

Take two and you will not have to call me in the morning

A terrific way to engage the muscle relaxation effect of “wind pool” is to take two tennis balls, put them into a clean sock and tie off the end. Then simply lie on your back on the floor and tuck the sock up under your occiput so the balls are pressing into those tender spots. This will help the muscles gently release from their contracted state, and also can induce an almost hypnotic calm after 5 to 10 minutes, as it triggers a deep relaxation response.



These points release neck tightness as well

Wind Pool, Gallbladder 20

Suffer recurrent colds or often have a stiff neck?

One final note to those of you who are prone to colds or sensitive to wind and drafts. As the name of this point implies it is a place where “wind” gathers. If you suffer from recurrent colds or are one of those people that “chill easily,” then be sure to wrap this part of your neck up in the winter and protect it from wind and cold. “Wind pool” has a connection with the immune system and if you protect yourself from wind and cold, you will enjoy better health. But, you don’t need me to tell you that --your mother no doubt constantly reminded you of this when you were a kid!

風池



Cover up "wind pool" if drafts are bothersome to you

Utmost Opening, Lung 6

This point is especially useful in the treatment of coughs due to colds, asthma and chronic lung congestion due to allergies.

Lung 6 is easily found because it either is tender to the touch, or there is a striated feeling to the muscles beneath the skin, or in extreme cases a feeling of little phlegm nodules under the skin. Important note: In my clinical experience I have found this point can be found anywhere from the textbook location pictured here to just about an inch away from the crease of the elbow. So you have to palpate to find it!

Massage this point on a regular basis to relieve coughing or persistent phlegm in the lungs. This is one important point to remember during cold and flu season, as it is quite effective in treating the lingering aftermath of the common cold. Additionally, it can be used to treat asthma and lung congestion from allergies.

If you have some kind of lung issue, palpate this point yourself and find the tender spot; it will be there. Once you find it, give it some constant, firm massage and watch over time as your lungs become less congested.



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Massaging this point helps to relieve coughs and asthma

The Great Rushing, Liver 3

This point, which is located in the web between the big toe and first toe, treats an extremely wide variety of issues. It is most often used to help regulate a woman's period and reduce cramps and discomfort associated with the period. It also treats headaches, upset stomachs, frustration, anger and resentment.

When life just feels all knotted up into a hairball of frustration and difficulty, this point creates the space that allows problems to unwind.

Additionally, it treats pain in the hands and feet, insomnia, eye and vision problems, rib and chest pain, and a variety of digestive issues.

Feeling "tight" in general? Slightly out of sorts? Irritable and unable to focus or dealing with digestive problems that have an emotional component? Then palpate in the area of Liver 3 and look for the tender spot that will certainly be there. Give it some firm and constant attention and notice how your chest opens up, the breath sinks lower into your belly and life in general seems more positive.

太
沖



Breathing into your tailbone will naturally drop the breath deep into your belly

Neck release points

There is good solid “channel theory” for why this works, but you don't need to be schooled in that for this technique to help you un-kink that crick in your neck from sleeping funny or spending too much time hunched over a computer. A bit of self-massage is all you need to unstuck the logjam of discomfort that keeps your head from gliding on its pivot. All you need to do is find a couple of sensitive points on your forearm, and give them a nice firm massage.

Where are these magic points?

Technically they are located on the Heart channel. To find the Heart channel draw an imaginary line from the outside corner of the little finger down to the bone that sticks out on the inside of your elbow.

Then starting from the elbow palpate toward the little finger for some spots that are either tender, feel like a thin sheet of plastic under the skin, or feel like there are grainy nodules under the skin. Give these places a nice slow, firm rub with the thumb. At the same time, slow and gently move your head back and forth. When you have the right points, your neck will quickly begin to release as you gently move your head.

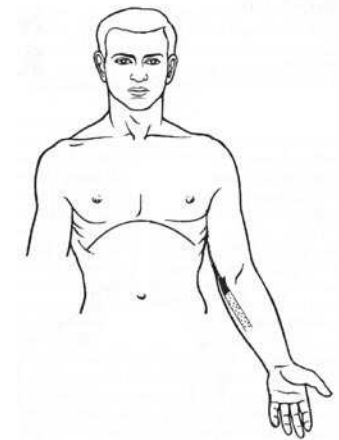
Which side should I use?

It depends -- whichever side has the more tender points tends to be the side that is more effective.

Many times there is some instantaneous relief. Even if that is the case, still it is best to massage and rotate your head for 3 to 5 minutes. Even if your neck is not sore, if you work long hours at a computer it is a good idea to do this. It will help to improve the blood flow to your neck and shoulders and prevent headaches, eyestrain and fatigue.

Try it out!

鬆
脖子
穴



Surprise your friends by relieving their neck pain with a simple massage

Leg Three Mile, Stomach 36

This is one of the heavy hitters of the acupuncture world as it is useful for treating everything from fatigue to constipation, dizziness to nausea, the common cold, abdominal distention and insomnia. Legend has it that when troops in ancient China were too fatigued to march another step, stimulating this point would rev up their energy and allow them to put in another three miles, hence its name.

How you can use at home

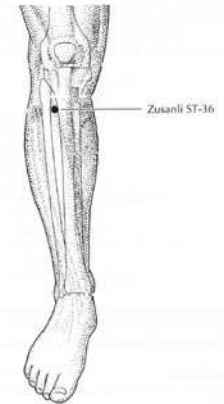
Stomach 36 and its sister points all are located about a thumb's width to the outside of the shinbone are (naturally enough) excellent points to treat any digestive issue. Over eat? Prone to acid reflux? Food poisoned? Digestion in general feel sluggish? This point's influence at times borders on miraculous. Best to dig in with your thumb and press into the muscle. It is not at all unusual to feel sensation radiate down the leg and even into the big or second toe.

Children especially respond quickly to this point, so give it a good massage after they complain of stomachaches from too much ice cream, or gently rub it for colicky babies. For us adults a nice little massage of Stomach 36 (and the area 4 to 5 inches directly below it as well) can be even more satisfying than a good back scratch.

Try it out the next time you or a family member has digestive upset.

Its better than Pepto-Bismol and without that scary pink color as well!

足三里



"The" point for digestive issues of any kind

The Tiger's Mouth, Lg Intestine 4

虎口

In mainland China they call this point He Gu (United Valley). I prefer the Taiwanese name, Hu Kou (Tiger's Mouth), as the actions of this point can at times be fierce.

Hu Kou is one of the legendary acupuncture points. It can be used by itself to treat an uncommonly wide variety of issues, and when combined with other points helps to potentiate their actions and in general stir things up.

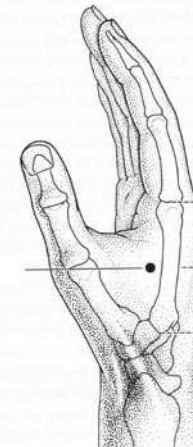
Most commonly this point is used to treat headaches, colds and flus, digestive problems, sinus issues, menstrual pain, fevers and tooth pain.

I've used this point on many occasions to beat the common cold, but you have act fast and catch it at the beginning stage. This point, which is located next to the middle of the first metacarpal bone within the fleshy muscle between the thumb and index finger, is often exquisitely tender to the touch, especially if you are getting or have any of the above listed issues. While stimulating it can be painful. The curative effect will be equally pronounced, as menstrual cramps calm down, sinuses open up, headaches diminish and nausea disappears.

Use the Tiger's Mouth to beat the common cold!

Anyone coming down with a cold will have tenderness in the area of this point. If caught in the very early stages a cold can be avoided by causing a light therapeutic sweat, which you can induce with about 7 to 10 minutes of strong stimulation of Lg Intestine 4.

Ideally, you want to get someone to massage this point for you, as it can be terribly uncomfortable and most of us are not willing to work it long enough on ourselves. Find a friend or partner who will ignore your moaning and complaining and have them give the Tiger's Mouth a firm and deep massage for about 5 minutes on each hand. If they press hard enough you will break a sweat (It helps if you cover up with a blanket first). Once the sweat comes out take a little nap and be sure to avoid drafts. You are then good to go!



The Tiger's Mouth treats more than headaches

Mirror image treatment, the power of reflection

We all know this old child's song,

"Toe bone's connected to the — ankle bone's; ankle bone connected to the — wrist bone.."

Wait! What?

That's right. When it comes to acupuncture, the wrist and ankle are reflections of each other; each can be treated through the other.

Really? This seems a little hocus-pocus.

Don't take my word for it. Try it yourself, or try it on someone else who has sprained or injured an ankle. The trick is to use the wrist on the OPPOSITE side of the body from the injured ankle. Look for some tender points that mirror the area of the ankle that is in pain. For example, if the pain is on the inside of the ankle, look for points on the wrist just under or around the thumb. Likewise, if the outside of the ankle has sustained an injury, look for points around the wrist on the back of the hand or below the little finger. You will be surprised to find areas on the wrist that are exquisitely painful to the touch.

How to treat.

Simply massage the points in the wrist that are painful. Yes, it will hurt, but it will help the ankle to feel better and can speed up the healing process.

Some people say these points are like magic, but that is not the case.

It is not magic, it is medicine -- Chinese medicine!

立竿見影



Quick and effective relief from pain

Wise words from the road

One of the fun things about living in Taiwan is the Chinglish that pops up like a synchronistic fortune cookie. Sometimes it helps to think about things in another language.



考慮一下

Push your luck, hang with the happy

Tea

茶

It is as common as common knowledge gets: Tea is good for you. It overflows with constituents that anti-oxidize, scrub free radicals, improve blood chemistry, fight cancer and promote clarity without a buzz. Fire up Google and a vast library of molecules and microbiology tell science's story of why *Camellia Sinensis* is of benefit. Indeed, there are a plethora of reasons to include tea within the habits of the day. But there is another fine reason for tea. Joy.

The joy that comes from the pleasure of time stretching into an endless evening of conversation and connection.
The joy that comes from hearing stories leisurely unfolded, like a slowly simmered stew.

Tea is not simply a leaf or region, nor only a taste of bitter or sweet, or a feeling in the mouth.
It is an unfolding connection between plants and rain, mountains and mist. It is woven from the conversations of soils and insects, sweltering afternoons of sun, and moonless nights of dark.
It is an art of timing, selecting and drying.
Bruising and rolling.
Roasting and laying fallow in ceramic urns.
Tea is a story, of which the drinking is but one chapter.

And mostly, tea is an opportunity for connection, and therein lays its deep nourishment.

Let's take a look at the therapeutics and energetics of various teas.



There is a teahouse at the corner of Yong Kang and Alley 52 in Taipei...

Tea

茶

Green tea

This is a tea with very little oxidation to the leaves. Basically it is picked and dried. Green tea tends to be light in taste and energetically is cold. People with certain digestive disorders exacerbated by cold foods should shy away from this tea. Western laboratory type research shows green tea to be chock full of anti-oxidants and anti-cancer constituents. This makes sense from a Chinese medicine point of view, as most cancers are seen as being “hot”, thus the cooling nature of green tea naturally leads to less tumor growth. In terms of drinkability, the green teas are often described as grassy or fruity. But, they are like a May flower --they bloom their delight and quickly fade. A couple or three pots of green tea and it is time for new leaves. Green tea is best drunk in the summer, due to its cooling nature.

Blue-green tea (oolong)

This is the stuff of which legends are made. Taiwan oolong has given rise to its own subculture, and rightly so. The oolongs are exquisite and delightfully drinkable teas. They have a moderate amount of oxidation, which gives them a study feel in the mouth and flowery fragrance in the nose. As with the greener teas they are rich in anti-oxidants, but who cares? We drink this stuff because it is just so darned tasty and the leaves hold up well through 7 to 8 washings.

Tie Guan Yin (iron goddess tea)

First, the image of an IRON goddess of mercy is a powerful delight all by itself. This is an interesting tea. Over on the mainland they leave it in a fairly un-oxidized green state. It has a rather grassy taste. In Taiwan however they roll and bruise the leaves, causing them to oxidize and bring out a deeper nutty flavor. Then they roast the leaves over a charcoal fire, which gives the tea a smoky caramel flavor. These Taiwanese leaves are more oxidized and thus not as full of anti-oxidants, however the higher level of oxidation and roasting makes it very easy on the digestion. In fact this tea helps to strengthen the digestion. Additionally as this is a more “warming” tea, it is well suited for drinking in the wintertime.



The most important thing in tea is the joy

Tea

茶

Red tea (what we know here in the West as “black tea”)

This is a fairly highly oxidized tea, thus giving rise to its rich heavy aroma and flavor. In the West we tend to combine other flavorings in this tea. In Asia this is fairly unheard of, as they prefer to experience the leaves on their own merit.

Pu’er tea (dark and mysterious)

If oolong tea is legend, then pu’er is a religion. This is a most unique tea that comes from trees located only in Yunnan and parts of Sichuan province. The Chinese consider this to be the true “black” tea as it continues to oxidize over the years from a fresh green into a brown, purple, then black leaf. Pu’er is one of the few teas that gets better with age. And much like fine wines, attention is paid to vintage, process and storage. Cakes of pu’er tea are traded like rare metals. It’s crazy.

As to its taste: Unique. Musty, and full, like honey mixed with Egyptian dust and the memory of youth. Pu’er tea is excellent for lowering cholesterol and blood pressure. And it has a bit of a calming effect.



Tea is best when shared

Resource list

Books:

The Web That Has No Weaver, by Ted Kaptchuk

The old standby introduction to Chinese medicine by one of the first Westerners to bring it back from Asia

Materia Medica, by Dan Bensky, et al

This is the English language reference concerning Chinese herbs. So detailed and through the Chinese would be smart to translate it from English to Chinese!

Acupuncture in Practice, Case Histories from the West, by Hugh MacPherson and Ted Kaptchuk

A glimpse into the minds of experienced practitioners as they work through a clinical case

Manual of Acupuncture, by Peter Deadman and Mazin Al-Khafaji

Hands down the best book on acupuncture points and meridians

Dragon Rises, Red Bird Flies: Psychology & Chinese Medicine, by Leon Hammer

Chinese medicine meets Western psychology

Web resources

gancao.net

Excellent resource for both practitioners and patients

acupuncture.com

Obviously, the 800-pound gorilla of Chinese medicine web sites

www.yongkangclinic.com/blog

The blog of Yong Kang Clinic, a running commentary on practical medicine and well-being

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資料



The journey of a thousand miles begins with this step