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Chinese Herbs for Pain Relief + How to Use Them

WTHN TEAM/14.06.22

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Regardless of if you're suffering from a common cold, an upset stomach, or a chronic pain problem – people don't like to suffer. Still, no matter how careful we are or how hard we try to avoid injury, pain is inevitable. So while you may not be in control of when or how it happens, you can at least be in control of how you manage it!

Exhibit A? Herbs! In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), [herbal medicine](#) – which uses the therapeutic effects of plants – has been used for centuries as a treatment therapy for a myriad of health problems, including acute or chronic pain. Herbs work in a variety of ways depending on which herbs are being used + the desired outcome. Many traditional medicines + over-the-counter pain medications we use today actually have plant-based origins, including aspirin which is made from White Willow bark. This is because our bodies naturally respond well to herbal remedies, making them a popular, safer choice among doctors to prescribe to their patients.

So how do these Chinese herbal medicines work in TCM exactly? By addressing the root cause of discomfort, as opposed to Western medicine, which only focuses on alleviating the sensation of pain. For best results, practitioners typically combine herbal medicine (muscle-pain sufferers, have you met [Head to Toe Relief](#) yet?) with alternative TCM treatments like [acupuncture](#), [acupressure](#), cupping + tai chi.

Looking for natural pain relief? Here's a deep dive into Chinese herbs as an alternative medicine for pain relief + how to use them at home.

The Best Chinese Herbs for Pain Relief

Corydalis Root (Yan Hu Suo)

The tuber or root of this go-to herbal medicine in Traditional Chinese Medicine (which shares the same flowering plant family as poppies!) has been used by martial artists in China for centuries to treat the aches + pain that come with martial arts. Found primarily in the high-altitude grasslands of Zhejiang, China, it is also top of mind for acupuncture practitioners to prescribe to patients to increase circulation, support the healing process, ease discomfort + even reduce inflammation. In a 2014 study, [researchers found](#) that corydalis plants also contain a compound called dehydrocorybulbine (DHCB) that was proven to reduce both inflammatory pain + injury-induced neuropathic pain in rodents. Boiled, brewed, or powdered, the recommended dosage is four to 12 grams daily.

Frankincense Resin (Ru Xiang)

This TCM classic not only alleviates acute or chronic pain + trauma to the body, but it can also treat inflammatory diseases. Interestingly enough, this hardened, gum-like material comes from the trunk of the *Boswellia carteri* tree, which is native to India + Africa. While frankincense can easily be found on its own in soaps, lotions + essential oils, we recommend combining it with Myrrh Resin (like in our Head to Toe Relief blend, which efficiently provides instant + long-term pain relief for body aches, joints + muscle pain, headaches, rheumatoid arthritis symptoms, acute or chronic discomfort, menstrual cramps – you name it!) for a synergistic effect that helps active blood circulation to relieve pain.

Safflower Flower (Hong Hua)

Chances are, you've probably heard of or used this tension-relieving herbal remedy (50% of which is grown in California) before – after all, it's widely believed to have been domesticated over 4,000 years ago. The seeds of its yellow + red flowers actually produce an edible oil known as safflower oil. Cooking with safflower oil, considered a healthier alternative to olive oil, is especially useful for easing menstrual discomfort, both physical + emotional. Researchers also suggest that adding as little as 1 ⅔ teaspoons of safflower oil a day to your diet can lower cholesterol + blood sugar levels.

Turmeric (Jiang Huang)

A member of the ginger root family, this flowering plant is traditionally harvested + ground into the fine, yellow powder you probably already use to spice up your favorite meals. But did you know this: Previous studies also show that turmeric contains medicinal properties – such as curcuminoids – soothe joint pain, abdominal pain, sore muscles + general discomfort while relieving tension in the head + body. (Turmeric has been used in Ayurvedic + TMC for nearly 4,000 years!). Because the curcumin content of turmeric is low when consumed in food, we recommend starting with 400-500 milligrams per day via supplement – or consuming it along with black pepper for better absorption.

Angelica Dahurica

This natural anti-inflammatory is primarily grown in East Asia + typically grows along the river banks of Siberia, Mongolia + Taiwan (to name a few!). It's used in large quantities in Chinese herbalism to alleviate headaches, toothaches, body aches + rheumatoid arthritis. Among TCM practitioners, Angelica Dahurica is thought to promote the flow of energy or Qi through the upper body to release tension in the head, neck + shoulders. We

suggest taking it with meals or in combination with another Chinese herbal remedy (such as Corydalis).

Sichuan Lovage Root

By promoting circulation to stimulate blood flow, this eucalyptol-infused root (which belongs to the same plant family as carrots, dill + parsley) blooms small white flowers + fruits + can grow up to two feet tall. In TCM, it is considered a “warming herb” + is therefore commonly used to help with cold symptoms. Additionally, sichuan lovage root soothes body aches as well as offers improvement for pain or swelling associated with the lower urinary tract. While the suggested dosage is three to nine grams, you can also add its leaves to salads, use it as a tincture up to three times daily, or even candy its stems for a sweet treat!

Feverfew (Xiao Bai Ju)

Native to Western Asia but now grown across the United States, feverfew contains a number of active analgesic, or pain-relieving, properties such as parthenolide, a common sesquiterpene lactone + flavonoids, which may reduce inflammation + muscle strains. Its aromatic leaves are traditionally used to prevent + treat a handful of conditions, such as fever, migraine headaches, rheumatoid arthritis, toothaches + stomach aches. Available in tablets, tinctures + teas, now’s the time to give this “medieval aspirin” a try.

Cinnamon (Rou Gui)

Add a little sweetness with a kick to your herb collection. Cinnamon’s been reported to alleviate occasional nausea, upset stomach or mild discomfort. Thanks to its antioxidant + anti-inflammatory properties, cinnamon can also help patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. Add a dash to watermelon for extra flavor, or swirl it in your morning coffee. The flavor alone will have you going back to the spice rack again + again.

Kudzu Root (Ge Gen)

This fast-spreading vine helps to relax the muscles of the upper body, including the neck + shoulders. In other words: It’s like an herbal massage for your body! Not only that, but this popular TCM herb is often prescribed by a doctor for the treatment of “wei” or a mild disease that manifests just under your body’s surface – such as stiff neck, migraine headaches + angina pectoris (chest pain) – according to Kaiser Permanente. Sounds good? Find it in our Oops I Did It Again herbal detox!

Licorice Root (Gan Cao)

When you think of licorice, you might think of a fragrant black candy with a distinct flavor. However, in addition to offering a sweet snack, it's also often used in TCM + Ayurvedic medicine. In fact, licorice root contains glycyrrhizin, which is an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory + antimicrobial property that soothes upset stomachs, reduces inflammation + treats upper respiratory problems. A small amount of Chinese licorice root is often added to herbal blends (like ours) to help circulate the blend throughout the body + to help the herbal treatments work together better.

Myrrh Resin (Mo Yao)

One of many Chinese herbs that are considered to be “neutral in nature,” myrrh promotes overall healing without affecting the overall balance of your body. Derived from the commiphora tree, myrrh is the yellowish, brownish substance (otherwise known as gum resin) that seeps out of the bark when cut. Bitter in taste + rooted in both Ayurvedic + Traditional Chinese Medicine, this centuries-old remedy has a long-proven history of moving stagnant blood through the uterus (to treat menstrual-related pain), healing sores + wounds + treating postpartum pain. As mentioned above, we recommend combining it with Frankincense Resin for the ultimate synergistic effect.

In Conclusion

Herbal medicine for pain management has been used in TCM treatments for centuries in lieu of over-the-counter pain relievers + prescription drugs, which often come with unwanted, long-term side effects – most notably, dependence + tolerance buildup.

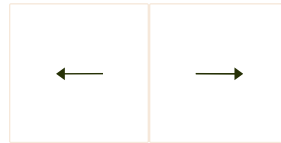
Ibuprofen, for example, can cause nausea, diarrhea, stomach ulcers or even kidney damage when taken too frequently. And then there's acetaminophen: This pain-relieving compound might be gentler on your stomach, but it also creates a toxic byproduct when digested that can result in liver damage – especially when taken with food or alcohol. Yikes!

Fortunately, herbal products in TCM are non-toxic, non-addictive + don't come with serious side effects! Plus, more + more studies are showing just how many benefits herbs offer: from easing back pain to musculoskeletal pain to neuropathic pain to menstrual pain to abdominal pain – the list goes on + on.

Pain is essentially your body's way of telling you to listen. So rather than ignoring it or speculating what's causing you discomfort (except for cases where it's obvious), being in tune with your body is the only way to work towards a healthier you!

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