

What is Chinese Herbal Medicine?

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What are Chinese Herbs?

Chinese herbs are just one element in the coherent system of Oriental Medicine. It involves the use of herbs, minerals and sometimes animal substances to treat illness and maintain good health. Chinese herbs are usually prescribed in conjunction with acupuncture treatments.

In Asia, about 1,600 herbs have been considered to contain medicinal substances throughout history. Currently, about 300 herbs are used – mostly from plants, as well as from mineral and animals.

Herbs have their own tastes which are characterized as sour, acrid, bitter, salty, sweet, bland, and temperatures which are characterized as hot, cold, warm and neutral. The properties of taste and temperature of each herb has specific effects. The therapeutic actions of substances can be described by linking its taste and temperature qualities.

Chinese herbal medicine has unique techniques for combining herbs in order to get desired and effective results known as mutual accentuation and mutual counteraction. Mutual accentuation is the combination of two substances with similar functions to accentuate their therapeutic actions. Mutual counteraction is a combination in which one substance's toxicity or side effects are reduced or eliminated by another substance, and so forth.

Herbs are one of two major pillars to support Oriental Medicine. Acupuncture and herbal formula are often prescribed together to treat a specific disorder and symptoms.

How are Chinese Herbs Prescribed?

Each herbal prescription is unique & developed to suit each patient's individual health needs at a particular time. The herbologist selects herbs to compliment or enhance their positive effects while simultaneously balancing or reducing potential negative side effects. No two formulas are alike. Unlike western medicine, the balance and interaction between all of the ingredients are more important than the effect of any individual herb.

Types of Herbal Medicine

Decoctions:

Decoctions consist of raw herbs which are cooked and consumed as a tea. Raw herbs are the most potent (and therefore also the most expensive) form of herbal medicine.

We do not recommend that patients cook raw herbs at home, as the process is complicated and time consuming. For your convenience, decoctions are prepared off-site and delivered directly to the patient in pre-cooked, individual servings.

Powders or Pastes:

Raw herbs are crushed into a powder (or granules) or paste, which is then mixed in warm water and consumed as a tonic or tea.

Patent Medicines:

These are standardized formulas, which are usually sold in capsule or pill form. Patent medicines are more affordable but less potent than decoctions or paste medicines.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is herbal medicine safe for vegetarians/vegans?

Yes, we offer vegetarian/vegan safe herbal formulas. We only use the finest quality ingredients, selected and purchased from reputable sources in the U.S. Most formulas contain over 90% plant & mineral materials (leaves, bark, roots, etc.). We never use materials from endangered species.

2. Can I take herbal medicine with my other medications?

Yes, herbal medicine is safe to take along with most other medications and supplements. However, herbal medicine should not be taken within 2 hours of any other medications. Please consult with the acupuncturist about any medications and other supplements you are currently taking starting any herbal formula.

3. Can I do a detox with herbal medicine?

Yes, herbal medicine is a safe, natural way to detoxify wastes and toxins which accumulate in your body's organs and tissues over time. Herbal medicine is also a very effective detox therapy for alcoholism and drug addiction.

4. How are Chinese herbs different from other types of "detox herbs" on the market?

"Detox herbs," colon cleansers, and other similar products usually contain a laxative or fiber supplement (or a combination of both). They work by encouraging the purging of waste material already present in the gastrointestinal tract. They contain "herbs" only in the sense that the dietary fiber usually derived from plant material. On the other hand, Chinese herbs work not only to cleanse your GI tract, they also help purge toxins and wastes deeply imbedded in the tissues and organs of the body such as the kidneys and liver.

Chinese herbs are a unique formula which is prescribed and taken as medicine upon the advice of a licensed practitioner of acupuncture and herbs (and not merely sold over the counter). Also, OTC detox products such as colon cleansers are not strictly regulated and often habit forming, leading to laxative abuse.