

DISEASES OF THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

Respiratory diseases are extremely common and often respond very well to treatment with acupuncture and Chinese herbs. Both acute and chronic respiratory diseases can be helped. In acute cases of invasions of Wind, acupuncture and herbal therapy can shorten the course of the illness and prevent any after-effects. If caught early enough, occasionally a cold can be stopped in its tracks. In chronic diseases, such as asthma and allergic rhinitis, treatment can vastly relieve symptoms, reduce dependency on drugs and, in some cases, cure the disease altogether.

As always, herbal remedies should not be prescribed until a clear diagnosis of the underlying patterns has been reached, based on the presenting symptoms and signs.

This newsletter will take a closer look at some of the Three Treasures remedies which may be used to treat respiratory illnesses. We will look firstly at remedies which treat the respiratory system directly, and then at ones which are often useful in the treatment of respiratory diseases to treat the underlying condition. The following respiratory diseases will be covered:

- colds, coughs and influenza
- asthma
- allergic rhinitis
- sinusitis
- propensity to catching colds
- wheezing and breathlessness

REMEDIES WHICH DIRECTLY TREAT THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

Clear Qi

Patterns: Lung-Qi not descending, Kidneys not grasping Qi

Clear Qi focuses mainly on treating the Biao, i.e. the failure of Lung-Qi to descend in either acute or chronic cases of asthma or breathlessness. It is especially useful in the treatment of children or young adults who have an atopic constitution. In these cases, often there is no sign of Phlegm (which is the main cause of asthma according to TCM theory), but there is a deficiency of the Defensive-Qi of the Lungs and Kidneys.

Expel Wind-Cold

Patterns: invasion of Wind-Cold, pathogenic factor on the Exterior

Expel Wind-Cold is used most commonly to treat acute conditions, namely an invasion of Wind-Cold which manifests with all the signs of a cold, such as runny nose, sneezing, aversion to cold, etc.. However, it can also be used in chronic conditions such as chronic runny nose or hay fever (when it is caused by Wind-Cold and not Wind-Heat). It is important to remember that this remedy only addresses the Biao, however, and does not address the underlying deficiency of Qi.

Expel Wind-Heat

Patterns: invasion of Wind-Heat at the Defensive-Qi level

Expel Wind-Heat, like Expel Wind-Cold is most commonly used to treat acute conditions, namely an invasion of Wind-Heat which manifests with the typical signs of influenza, such as fever, body aches, headache, cough and sore throat, etc.. However, it can also be used in more chronic conditions such as hayfever (when it is caused by Wind-Heat and not by Wind-

Cold). As with Expel Wind-Cold, this remedy only addresses the Biao and does not address the underlying deficiency of Qi.

Jade Screen

Patterns: Wind impairing the descending and diffusing of Lung-Qi in the nose

Jade Screen treats the manifestations of allergic rhinitis, with secondary sinusitis. It is appropriate for many allergic conditions, such as hay fever and allergy to animals and house dust mites. Its main emphasis is on expelling Wind and restoring the diffusion of Lung-Qi to stop sneezing and nasal discharge. It also helps to relieve sinusitis, when this has developed as a result of long term allergic rhinitis. (Welcome Fragrance is the more appropriate remedy to treat primary, chronic sinusitis with a thick, yellow, nasal discharge).

Ringing Metal

Patterns: Phlegm-Heat in the Lungs

Ringing Metal is used to treat an acute cough with expectoration of profuse, yellow sputum which follows an upper respiratory tract infection. This may occur when someone is unable to fully shake-off an invasion of Wind and is left with a lingering, acute cough. There may also be accompanying symptoms of a feeling of heat, thirst, insomnia and a feeling of oppression of the chest. Ringing Metal is specifically for Phlegm-Heat, and not for Dry-Phlegm-Heat in the Lungs. The latter manifests as a cough that is primarily dry and sounds dry but also with the difficult, occasional expectoration of scanty sputum. In the former case there will be profuse sputum and the cough is not dry.

Clear the Soul

Patterns: Phlegm-Heat obstructing the chest and Mind, Lung-Qi not descending

Clear the Soul (a variation of Warming the Gall-Bladder Decoction - Wen Dan Tang) is most commonly used for treating emotional tension and anxiety occurring against a background of Phlegm obstructing the Lungs and Heart. However, it can also be used to resolve residual Phlegm-Heat in the Lungs which manifests on a physical level, i.e. with a chronic cough with expectoration of yellow sputum. This condition may or may not have derived from the after effects of an attack of Wind.

Welcome Fragrance

Patterns: chronic Damp-Heat and Toxic Heat blocking the nose and sinuses with an underlying deficiency of Qi

Welcome Fragrance treats chronic sinusitis. It focuses on treating the Biao rather than the Ben and an essential indication for the use of this formula is a yellow-sticky nasal discharge. Welcome Fragrance differs from Jade Screen which treats allergic rhinitis characterized by a white-watery-clear nasal discharge and sneezing. Therefore, although both formulae treat the Biao, they are for quite different conditions.

REMEDIES OFTEN USED IN THE LONG-TERM TREATMENT OF RESPIRATORY DISEASES

Limpid Sea is an extremely important remedy in the treatment of chronic, long-term asthma in adults where there is Phlegm in the Lungs. I often use it in these cases in conjunction with Clear-Qi, to make Lung-Qi descend.

Strengthen the Root is also an extremely important remedy in the treatment of chronic asthma which is non-atopic. There is nearly always a deficiency of the Kidneys involved, manifesting with their failure to grasp Qi and consequent breathlessness. I often prescribe Strengthen the Root after the patient has been on Limpid Sea for a while and much of the

Phlegm (which, in this case, is the Biao) has been resolved. Strengthen the Root addresses the Ben, specifically Kidney-Yang deficiency.

Herbal Sentinel - Yang, by strengthening Lung-, Spleen- and Kidney-Qi, strengthens the immune system which, of course, is important in the treatment of people with an allergic constitution. It can also be used in people who have a propensity to catching colds, coughs and influenza. This formula, in both situations, is therefore preventive rather than curative. It should be taken either after the condition has been cured or when the condition is in a chronic stage and, in the case of asthma, the asthma attacks are slight and infrequent.

Herbal Sentinel - Yin strengthens Lung-, Spleen- and Kidney-Yin and treats the same conditions as Herbal Sentinel -Yang, but when they derive from Yin rather than Qi or Yang deficiency. This should obviously be decided upon by looking at the tongue (which in this case would be Red without coating or with a rootless coating) and taking the pulse (which in this case would be Floating-Empty or Fine).

	Ben or Baio	Acute or chronic	Main patterns	Allergic or non-allergic conditions	Effective combinations
Clear Qi	Biao	Acute or chronic condition	Lung-Qi not descending, Kidneys not grasping Qi	Allergic and non-allergic conditions	With Limpid Sea for chronic asthma from Phlegm
Expel Wind-Cold	Biao	Usually acute, sometimes chronic	Invasion of Wind-Cold	Non-allergic	With Herbal-Sentinel - Yang to treat the Ben
Expel Wind-Heat	Biao	Usually acute, sometimes chronic	Invasion of Wind-Heat	Non-allergic	With Herbal-Sentinel - Yin to treat Ben
Jade Screen	mainly Biao	Acute or chronic	Wind impairing descending and diffusing of Lung-Qi	Allergic	With Herbal-Sentinel Yang
Ringing Metal	Ben	Acute	Phlegm-Heat in Lungs m	Non-allergic	With Limpid Sea if profuse Phleg
Clear the Soul	either Ben or Biao	Chronic	Phlegm-Heat in Lungs	Non-allergic	With Limpid Sea if profuse Phlegm
Welcome Fragrance	mainly Biao	Acute or chronic	Damp-Heat and Toxic Heat	Non-allergic	With Jade Screen if derives from allergic rhinitis
Limpid Sea	Biao	Chronic	Phlegm	Non-allergic	With Clear Qi

					in chronic asthma from Phlegm
Strengthen the Root	Ben	Chronic	Kidney-Yang deficiency	Non-allergic	With Clear Qi in chronic asthma
Herbal-Sentinel - Yang	Ben	Chronic	Kidney-, Lung- and Spleen-Yang deficiency	Allergic	With Jade Screen in allergic rhinitis or Clear Qi in allergic asthma
Herbal Sentinel - Yin	Ben	Chronic	Kidney-, Lung- and Spleen-Yin deficiency	Allergic	With Jade Screen in allergic rhinitis or Clear Qi in allergic asthma

N.B: the combinations suggested in this table are only examples and there are many other possible ways of combining remedies. As always, remedies should be prescribed according to the symptoms and signs manifesting.

The following Tables illustrate the treatment protocol of the most common respiratory diseases seen in practice.

	Seasonal	Perennial
Allergic rhinitis	Jade Screen during the spring/summer Herbal Sentinel - Yin or Yang during the autumn and winter	Jade Screen and Herbal Sentinel - Yin or Yang the whole year
Allergic asthma	During attacks Clear Q	Between attacks Herbal Sentinel - Yin or Yang
Non-Allergic asthma	During attacks Clear Qi and Limpid Sea	Between attacks Strengthen the Root and Limpid Sea

NB "During attacks" does not mean actually during an asthma attack, but in a period where the attacks are severe and frequent. "Between attacks" means in a period where the attacks are infrequent and mild.

Sinusitis

Acute

Chronic

Welcome Fragrance (9 to 12 tablets a day)

Welcome Fragrance (6 tablets a day) and Prosperous Earth or Soothe the Centre (to strengthen the Spleen)

Case Histories

A 60-year-old woman presented with severe asthma which she had been suffering from her whole life. She experienced almost constant severe breathlessness and wheezing, and regularly had acute asthma attacks where she usually had to be hospitalized. She was constantly exhausted and found it very hard to get warm. She had been on strong oral and inhaled steroids for 50 years. Her tongue was Red and peeled and her pulse was Floating-Slippery.

I diagnosed severe Lung-Qi and Kidney-Yang deficiency with chronic Phlegm and Dampness. I strengthened the Spleen- and Kidney-Yang with acupuncture and prescribed Limpid Sea (4 tablets a day) and Clear-Qi (4 tablets a day). The patient saw an immediate improvement in her asthma, with the wheezing and breathlessness becoming less severe. She also felt much less tired. After a year of treatment, working alongside her Western doctor, she was taking a quarter of the dose of steroids she had been and had seen a consistent, marked improvement in her asthma.

Interestingly, on two occasions during the treatment I prescribed Strengthen the Root to try and address the underlying Kidney deficiency. On both occasions this aggravated her asthma. However, I then tried a third time when there was much less Phlegm and the patient found she was able to take a small dose (2 tablets a day) without any aggravation of her symptoms.

In patients who have been on inhaled steroids for some time, the tongue is not a reliable indication of the underlying patterns. This patient is a clear case of this where she had quite obvious, severe Yang deficiency although her tongue was Red and Peeled.

A 29-year old woman had recently developed allergic symptoms that she had not experienced since she was a teenager. She had had the same symptoms on and off as a child. They manifested with bouts of sneezing, mild asthma and eczema, runny nose and watery eyes. Her tongue was Pale and her pulse slightly Soggy on the right. Both Rear positions were weak.

I prescribed Clear-Qi and Jade Screen initially, the former to deal with the slight asthma and the latter with the sneezing, runny nose and eyes. These symptoms had largely improved after three months and I then stopped Clear-Qi and prescribed Herbal-Sentinel Yang in its place to deal with the underlying deficiency. This should help to prevent a further bout of allergic symptoms.

A 56-year-old man developed acute sinusitis after a particularly bad bout of the ❖ flu. He had a yellow nasal discharge, pain in the sinuses and a dull frontal headache. He was otherwise in good health. I prescribed 6 tablets of Welcome Fragrance daily. After two weeks the sinusitis had totally cleared up.

A 39-year old woman had a cough with profuse yellow sputum which had developed two weeks ago after an invasion of Wind-Heat. She also had a feeling of oppression in the chest and felt slightly hot and thirsty. Her pulse was Slippery and the tongue had a thin-yellow coat.

I diagnosed retention of Phlegm-Heat in the Lungs following an acute invasion of Wind-Heat. I prescribed 6 tablets of Ringing Metal a day. I also treated her with acupuncture twice a week. After two weeks the patient felt back to normal and the cough with sputum had gone.

NB I chose Ringing Metal rather than Clear the Soul in this case because the cough was acute and a definite after-effect of the invasion of Wind-Heat.

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