

Herb

The art and science of Chinese Medicine includes the practice acupuncture of tuina (meridian-based massage), qigong (life-force cultivation), dietary therapy, and herbal medicine. This essay will introduce the basic principles used in Chinese herbal medicine, and provide a listing of the categories of herbs.

Tastes, Temperatures & Channels Entered

The way that an herb acts within the body – and hence its therapeutic effect – is determined by its temperature, its taste and the channels/meridians that it enters. An herb's temperature is classified as hot, warm, neutral, cool or cold. In line with common sense, cool and cold herbs are used to treat hot conditions, while warm and hot herbs are used to treat cold conditions. The tastes ascribed to herbs include sweet, sour, bitter, acrid and salty. Sweet herbs are used to tonify qi. Sour herbs have an astringent effect in the body. Bitter herbs are used to dry damp and clear heat. Acrid herbs have the power to disperse cold and move stagnation. Salty herbs are used to soften and purge.



Occasionally just a single herb is prescribed for a patient's condition. Far more common, however, is for several herbs to be combined into an herbal formula. In the context of an herbal formula, a single herb acts not only according to its own taste and temperature and channels entered, but also in concert with the other herbs in the formula. The overall effect of a formula is the result of the synergy or alchemy created by the combination of the single herbs.

Chinese Herbal Categories

The herbs included in the Chinese Materia Medica are organized into categories. The categories are based upon Chinese medical diagnostic patterns. The herbs in the "dispel wind dampness" category, for instance, are those most commonly used with diagnoses of "Wind-Damp" (e.g. in various skin conditions). The herbs in the "supplement" category are those called upon to remedy "vacuity" conditions (when the body's yin,

yang, qi or blood needs support). Following is a complete listing of the herbal categories currently in use. For a listing of the individual herbs in a specific category, click on the category title. (Please note: This is a work in progress!)

Release Exterior - Herbs in this category – through their outward, dispersing action - repel external pathogenic influences (e.g. when we're on the verge of getting a "cold").

Clear Internal Heat - Herbs in this category clear internal heat of all kinds: vacuity, repletion, toxic-heat, heat in the blood, damp heat.

Precipitate - Herbs in this category are used primarily to treat constipation, and include cathartics, purgatives and laxatives.

Drain Dampness - Herbs in this category promote urination, so are useful for treatment of edema and urinary disorders.

Dispel Wind Dampness - Herbs in this category increase circulation and decrease swelling/inflammation, and are used largely to treat arthritis and skin conditions.

Transform Phlegm and Stop Cough - Herbs in this category clear phlegm and relax the cough reflex.

Aromatic Transform Dampness - Herbs in this category revive a Spleen overwhelmed by dampness.

Disperse Fodd Accumulation - Herbs in this category move stagnation.

Recify Qi - Herbs in this category move Liver qi and remove stagnation from the digestive system.

Recify Blood - Herbs in this category either stop bleeding or increase circulation to remove blood stagnation.

Tonify/Supplement.

Herbs in this category are used to nourish and strengthen the body by supplementing yin, yang, qi and blood. The "tonics" in this category are considered superior to all other herbs, because they can be used for prevention of disease as well as treatment (e.g. in formulas supportive of Taoist Inner Alchemy longevity practices).

Astringe - The herbs in this category dry excessive secretions (diarrhea, urination, sweating).

Calm Spirit - The herbs in this category have a calming effect, and are useful in treating anxiety, insomnia, irritability, etc.

Aromatic Open Orifices - The herbs in this category are used to revive consciousness.

Extinguish Wind, Stop Spasm - The herbs in this category are useful in treating muscle spasms or any kind of involuntary movements, as well as hypertension.

Expel Parasites - The herbs in this category are used to destroy or expel parasites.

Expel external application - The herbs in this category are applied topically for sprains, spasms, bruises or skin problems (e.g. in Shaolin/Taoist herbal training formulas used to treat martial arts injuries).

Chinese herb(al) tea or medicinal herbal tea

a kind of infusion made from purely Chinese medicinal herbs in Guangdong(K-wangtung), China. It usually tastes bitter or lightly sweet and its colour is typically black or dark brown, depending on what kinds of herbs are used. Although it is referred to as "tea", it seldom contains any part of the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) and is thus an herbal tea.

Cantonese people boil what are referred to as cooling herbs in Traditional Chinese medicine to make herbal tea, which is consumed in order to relieve the heat and humidity in the body. Therefore, Chinese herb tea is referred to as cold tea or cooling tea in the Chinese language.

There are many kinds of cooling tea. Different kinds of tea are purported to cure or relieve a variety of diseases. Some teas are consumed to alleviate sore throats, some for flu, and others for a number of ailments.

Cooling tea is quite popular in Guangdong, Macau and Hong Kong. Many families make their tea at home. Some families are herb tea specialists who open their own shops, selling different kinds of herbal tea. Some shops have been open for 150 years in Guangzhou and 50–60 years in Hong Kong.

In 1990s and 2000s, cold tea has been bottled, canned or boxed by some herbal tea specialists and is being sold in supermarkets in Asia and Asian markets overseas as fewer and fewer families have time to make them at home. These products are usually sweetened.

The natural herbal teas in China have been used to help boost health of human bodies physically and mentally and also heal or prevent illness that are the main aspects of health benefits and medical uses for Chinese. People therefore increase their immunity and keep healthy gradually. Also, it includes antioxidant properties that have positive medicinal effects on human bodies.

The ingredients of herbal teas are mainly fresh dried flowers, leaves, seeds or roots, and grains. Those ingredients are easily found in the nature worldwide.