

TREATING ACUTE COMMON COLD

One of the great contributions Chinese medicine offers the West is the availability of herbs and herbal formulas that directly attack viral heat toxins causing the common cold, influenza, upper respiratory infections, and common pediatric diseases. Here, western medicine is at a total loss, offering at best bed rest and fluids, and at worse, antibiotics. Antibiotics are ineffective against viral infections, doing nothing to alter the severity of symptoms or the time frame of an infection. However, they do negatively impact the body's immune system by destroying the beneficial gut bacteria that neutralize harmful toxins. By destroying gut bacteria, one's immune system becomes depleted, doing the work that would have been done by beneficial bacteria.

While western herbology offers several antiviral herbs such as echinacea and dandelion (*Taraxacum*), the Chinese herbal materia medica has at least 30 strong medicinal herbs that can destroy pathogenic viruses. Modern clinical research in China has validated their efficacy against the viruses that cause common cold, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, respiratory, encephalitis, meningitis, herpes, and hepatitis. Herbs with antiviral effect used in the classical formulas included *Lonicera Jin Yin Hua*, *Forsythia Lian Qiao*, *Taraxacum Pu Gong Ying*, *Isatis Ban Lan Gen*, *Isatis Da Qing Ye*, *Oldenlandia Bai Hua She She Cao*, *Smilax Tu Fu Ling* and *Lasiosphaera Ma Bo*.

Although not discussed in the classical literature, certain herbs have emerged in the last fifty years that are also effective against viruses. These include *Ilex Mao Dong Qing*, *Andrographis Chuan Xin Lian*, *Evodia San Cha Ku*, *Houttuynia Yu Xing Cao*, *Patrinia Bai Jiang Cao*, *Polygonum Hu Zhang* and *Viola Zi Hua Di Ding*.

When we evaluate the appropriateness of an herbal formula in fighting a viral disease, one benchmark is the inclusion of one or more of the herbs listed above.

Clinical Application of Chinese Herbal Products.

A number of Chinese herbal products exist to treat viral colds. The clinician chooses a product based on stage of the infection, location (nose, throat, lungs, etc), predominant symptoms and severity. The following herbal formulas can be used at various stages of a cold.

YIN QIAO JIE DU WAN. The *Yin Qiao San* formula, developed by Wu Jutang in 1798, was originally intended as a pediatric formula for measles and chicken pox, working to push heat toxins out to the surface. In modern times, it is a very popular

formula for the early stage of a wind-heat common cold, marked by sore throat, slight fever, and slight stuffy nose. It can be used alone, or in combination with stronger antiviral formulas such as *Gan Mao Ling*.

SANG JU YIN was also developed by Wu Jutang, and many of the herbal ingredients are similar to *Yin Qiao San*. It addresses wind-heat entering the lungs, causing a dry cough.

GAN MAO LING means “Common Cold Efficacious-Remedy”. This version by Herbal Times is similar to *Yin Qiao San* and *Sang Ju Yin*, offering a strong formula for wind-heat cough with fever and chills.

GAN MAO JIE DU WAN is based on the popular patent medicine Gan Mao Ling. In this formula, 75% of the formula uses herbs with strong anti-viral properties, including two unusual herbs from Taiwan, *gang mei gen* (*Radix Ilicis Asprellae*) and *san cha ku* (*Radix-Ramus Evodiae Leptae*). It is an effective formula for viral heat-toxins, and can be used alone, or in combination with wind-dispersing formulas such as *Yin Qiao San* or *Sang Ju Yin*. It is the herbal product I use the most for common cold and flu.

CHUAN XIN LIAN is an effective three-herb combination for infections of the throat or lymph glands. It’s uses *Andrographis Chuan Xin Lian* (50%), *Taraxacum Pu Gong Ying* (25%), and *Isatis Ban Lan Gen* (25%). This formula is very good for severe sore throat, and can be used alone, or combined with *Yin Qiao San* for sore throat in common cold. In cases where sore throat is due to streptococcus bacterial infections, *Pu Ji* can be combined with **HUANG LIAN JIE DU WAN**, a strong antibacterial formula dating back to Wang Tao, 752. This combination is as effective as western antibiotics.

PU JI XIAO DU YIN was created by Luo Tianyi during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). This large and complicated formula (14 herbs) may have originally used to fight diphtheria, an epidemic disease that causes fatal swelling of the throat. Clinically, it is helpful for flu or common cold marked by swollen lymphatic glands and sore throat. I often use it in young children with chronic swollen neck lymph glands or tonsillitis. For tonsillitis, combine with *Chuan Xin Lian*.

CHAI GE JIE JI WAN is used when the pathogenic toxins have moved into the *shaoyang* stage, including the lymphatic system. Whereas *Pu Ji* addresses viral heat toxins in the lymphatics, this formula is used once the heat toxins have cleared, with remaining symptoms of fatigue and chills without fever. It originated with Tao Hua in 1445, and is an elaboration of Zhong Zhongjing’s *Xiao Chai Hu Tang*.

When strong nasal symptoms accompany a common cold, one can combined a product like *Gan Mao Jie Du Wan* or *Yin Qiao San* with any of the following: **BI YAN WAN, PE MIN KAN WAN, or XIN YI WAN.**

For prevention of cold, one can use **YU PING FENG WAN**, a formula attributed to both Zhu Zhenheng (Danxi), 1481. This formula is useful to prevent the catching of common cold, and also prepares one before and during the allergy season.

These formulas offer an excellent arsenal for treating the various presentations of common viral colds, whether they be mild or serious, acute or chronic. Once a viral cold proceeds into the lungs, cough will develop. There are actually 7 stages of cough due to exogenous invasion, and in a future article I would like to address appropriate herbal formulas.

When one considers a weak or absent arsenal used by Western physicians, it is easy to see that the antiviral Chinese herbal products are one of the most useful contributions of Chinese medicine.

[More information on the formulas discussed in this article can be found in my book, *Chinese Herbal Patent Medicines, The Clinical Desk Reference* (Shya, 2001). Product numbers allow easier reference.]

Bi Yan Wan (1C3-2)

Chai Ge Jie Ji Wan (1B1-2)

Chuan Xin Lian (2A2-2)

Chuan Xiong Cha Tiao Wan (1A-3)

Gan Mao Ling (1A3-3)

Gan Mao Ling Jie Du Wan (1B1-1)

Huang Lian Jie Du Wan (2B1-8)

Pe Min Kan Wan (1C2-2)

Pu Ji Xiao Du Wan (1B3-1)

Sang Ju Yin Wan (1B1-5)

Xin Yi Wan (1C1-2)

Yin Qiao Jie Du Wan (1B2-4)

Yin Qiao Wan (1B2-1)

Yu Ping Feng Wan (12A1-8)

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