



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

Recovering From Cold / Flu Symptoms: Herbal Tinctures to Get Your Patients Back on Track

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As the winter months fade into spring, it is not uncommon for clinicians to encounter patients with lingering symptoms of colds and flu—particularly this year due to higher percentage of flu presentations. In my clinical experience, it is common for patients to attempt to self-medicate during the acute phase of the cold / flu presentation and or appear at the TCM clinic after taking over-the-counter herbs and / or antibiotics.

In the majority of these cases, the main symptoms after the acute cold / flu has passed are fatigue and lingering low-grade respiratory issues. In this article I will cover my favorite two-herb combinations to utilize to help resolve lingering cold / flu complications.

Huang Qi & Dang Shen

My favorite two-herb combination for lingering fatigue with accompanying low-grade respiratory issues post cold / flu is the pair: Huang Qi (Astragalus) and Dang Shen (Codonopsis). Dang Shen enters the Spleen and Lung channel and is sweet and neutral. Huang Qi also enters the Spleen and the Lung channels and is sweet and slightly warm.

This combination of herbs is beautifully matched to the issues of lingering fatigue and lingering low-grade respiratory symptoms so often encountered post cold / flu. The pair can easily be made into a tea or added to soup stocks or when cooking rice or quinoa. If patients are non-compliant with such methods, the patent medicine Shen Qi Da Bu Pian can be employed.

This combination of medicinals will gently boost the Qi and nourish the Lungs helping to alleviate fatigue and low-grade cough without causing nervous energy or insomnia as well as boost the Wei Qi in order to prevent relapse of cold / flu symptoms. This herb combination is excellent for children and seniors alike and can also be taken prophylactically to prevent the occurrence of cold / flu presentations and in this case can be combined with Yu Ping Feng Wan for deeper protection

without troublesome side-effects.



American Ginseng & Fenugreek

My second favorite two-herb combination for lingering cold / flu syndromes presenting with fatigue and low-grade respiratory issues is: Xi Yang Shen (American Ginseng) and Hu Lu Ba (Fenugreek). Xi Yang Shen enters the Kidney, Heart, Lung and Spleen channels and is sweet and cooling. Hu Lu Ba enters the Kidney channel and is warming. Western herbalism has historically used Fenugreek as an expectorant and we can therefore safely hypothesize that this medicinal has an affinity for the Lung channel as well. The combination of these two medicinals is a harmonious pairing of cooling and warming, nourishing and clearing.

In particular, this combination is highly effective in presentations in which the cold / flu has damaged the Lung Yin resulting in a chronic weak dry cough coupled with fatigue. Xi Yang Shen nourishes fluids and can gently nourish Lung Yin which can be damaged by dry weather, chronic coughing, smoking or antibiotic use. This combination can also be combined with Yu Ping Feng Wan in severe cases of post-cold / flu fatigue. This pairing of formulas is also highly effective in the recovery from Epstein Barr presentations as lingering chronic fatigue is often a primary symptom in such cases.

Foods for Recovery

Two key foods which I often encourage patients to consume to recover from the fatigue and potential Qi / Yin vacuity post-cold / flu is small amounts of ghee and daily servings of bone broth. One teaspoon of ghee daily can deeply nourish the Kidney / Lung Yin and is a great addition to food therapy in cases of dry lingering cough and post-antibiotic fatigue.

High quality bone broth is also an excellent adjunctive therapy for post-cold / flu presentation and can easily be added to soups containing Huang Qi and Dang Shen. Clinicians should educate

patients on the important benefits of quality nutrition and food therapy to help recover from colds / flu as most patients have low appetites after suffering from cold / flu issues and are in need of dense easy-to-digest foods. Vegetable soups with added bone broth and medicinal herbs are highly effective in such cases and nutrient dense.

These two simple two-herb formulas along with medicated soups can easily shift nagging issues over to a state of balance. Most patients expect to quickly bounce back from cold / flu issues and quickly return to work or a busy life without ample help or nutrition. These cases are situations in which TCM practitioners can truly educate and assist patients to achieve a deeper state of well-being and overall health and prevent relapse / future cold-flu complications.

Sometimes the pathway to a return to health is built on simple dependable fundamentals and TCM practitioners should strive to remember this and not get caught up in the marketing of supplement companies claiming to possess "miracle" cold / flu remedies. Often the best route in cold / flu cases is adequate hydration and deep rest followed by appropriate herbal / food therapy to help the body return to a state stronger than before.

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