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In short, TCM doesn't analyze herbs by their chemical ingredients. It categorizes herbs by their properties and observed effects. That includes everything from taste and temperature to the organ channel that it affects or "enters." Then the herb is prescribed according to TCM healing principles for a particular ailment. This is the core of Chinese herbal medicine for facial rejuvenation - a holistic approach for youth and beauty. The following are some of the general guidelines for choosing the right

herbs in facial- rejuvenation treatment:

### Herbs by Levels

The oldest Chinese medical literature divides herbals into three levels: superior, middle and inferior.

- Inferior: Herbs are used on individuals with special ailments. They can only be taken safely in small doses. They often are quite toxic.
- Middle: Herbs are nourishing and are used for short periods only and in small doses. They sometimes are toxic and often used in formulas with other herbs that offset their toxicity.
- Superior: Herbs are not toxic and are used for long periods of time to treat many different conditions. They are associated with longevity and rejuvenation and are best for general balancing.

Most of the herbs used in TCM facial rejuvenation are superior. The few that aren't superior are not toxic.

### Herbs by Taste

TCM practitioners have known for a long time that the taste of an herb tells a lot about the kind of action it will have inside the body. Choose herbs from the following categories for different skin conditions:

- Sweet: Sweet-tasting herbs nourish the body and skin; therefore, they help rectify a number of deficiency conditions that cause drying or wrinkled skin. Commonly used herbs in this category are *shou di huang* (Radix di huang), *huang jing* (Rhizoma polygonati), and *gou qi zi* (Fructus lycii).
- Pungent: Pungent-tasting herbs help energy and blood circulation, clearing up *qi* or phlegm blockage that causes skin rashes and dark spots. Herbs such as *bai zhi* (Radix angelicae dahuricae) and *bo he* (Herba menthae haplocalycis) perform these functions.
- Bitter: Bitter-tasting herbs clear heat and toxin from the body and skin. They mostly are used for skin rashes and acne. Commonly used herbs are *bai xian pi* (Cortex dictamni dasycarpi radices), *huang qin* (Radix Scutellariae baicalensis) and *ku shen* (Radix sophorae flavescens).
- Sour and astringent: Both these tastes indicate the herb's function of stopping fluid leakage in the body. They can help stop the excessive secretion of sweat and oil in the skin. Herbs such as *lian zi* (Semen nelumbinis), *wu wei zi* (Fructus schisandrae chinensis), and *bai guo* (Semen ginkgo bilobae) are in this category.
- Bland: Herbs with a bland taste tend to help the body leach out excessive dampness and end water retention. Combined with other herbs, they're helpful in clearing away puffiness and eye bags. *Fu ling* (Sclerotium poriae cocos) and *yi yi ren* (Semen coicis lachryma jobi) are commonly used herbs in this category.
- Salty: Salty-tasting herbs can dissipate nodules and calm spirit. They often are used in herbal formulas for acne conditions. Pearl (Margarita) is one of the commonly used herbs in this category.

### Herbs by Channel

Herbs usually benefit one or more specific organ systems by "entering" those organs' channels. For

skin rejuvenation, five of those channels are most important.

**Kidney:** Herbs entering the kidney channel generally nourish body essence and nourish the skin. Many of the herbs for wrinkles and age spots work through the kidney channel. Some of the commonly used herbs are: *to si zi*, *nu zhen zi* (*Fructus ligustri lucidi*) and *e jiao* (*Gelatinum corii asini*).

**Liver:** Herbs that enter the liver channel nourish blood and soothe emotions. They are commonly used for facial discoloration and weakened vision. Herbs like *gou qi zi* (*Fructus lycii*) and *gang gui* (*Radix angelicae sinensis*) are commonly used.

**Stomach and Spleen:** Herbs entering either or both of these paired channels tonify *qi* (energy) and help the body transform dampness. If the digestive system is weak, *qi* will be deficient and the dampness obstruction often accompanies it. These have important functions for skin rejuvenation. Spleen and stomach herbs are especially effective for aging skin such as wrinkles, sagging of the face and eye puffiness, including eye bags. Commonly used herbs in this category are *bai zhu* (*Rhizoma atractylodis macrocephalae*), *huang qi* (*Radix astragali membranaceus*) and *ren sheng* (*Radix ginseng*).

**Large Intestine:** Herbs that enter the large intestine channel usually are used to treat skin conditions like acne and eczema. Some of these herbs are: *dong gua ren* (*Semen benincasae hispidae*), *yu xing cao* (*Herba cum radice houttuyniae cordate*) and *bai jiang cao* (*Herba cum radix patriniae*).

## Herbs by Function

Chinese herbs also are categorized by what they actually do inside the body. There are many categories of herb function. These are the most important categories for herbal beauty treatments.

**Herbs that release the exterior:** They usually are pungent-tasting and enter the lung channel. Many induce sweating - a good example of "releasing the exterior." Many herbs in this category are used for treating facial discoloration, skin rashes and acne, especially if external wind is a factor in the condition. Commonly used herbs: *fang feng* (*Radix ledebouriellae*), *bai zhi* (*Radix angelicae dahuricae*), *ju hu* (*Flos chrysanthemi morifoli*) and *song ye* (*Folium mori albae*).

**Herbs that clear away heat:** By eliminating excess internal heat, these herbs clean the blood and detoxify the body. Many of them are bitter and cold in nature and enter the stomach, liver or lung channel. They may have antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties and help the body fight infection. For facial beauty, they are used for acne, skin rashes, dark facial spots and redness of skin. Commonly used herbs: *huang qin* (*Radix scutellariae baicalensis*), *huang liang* (*Rhizoma coptidis*), *lian qiao* (*Fructus forsythiae suspensae*) and *pu gong ying* (*Herba taraxaci mongolici cum radice*).

**Herbs that expel dampness:** Warm and aromatic herbs that enter the stomach and spleen channel revive spleen function. Their action can penetrate skin and muscle layers so they often are used externally as herbal creams. Internally, they address any skin conditions coming from weak digestion, including sagging face and puffy eyes. Commonly used herbs are: *gui zhi* (*Ramulus cinnamomi cassiae*), *xi xin* (*Herba cum radix asari*) and *sheng jiang* (*Rhizoma zingiberis officinalis recens*).

**Herbs that tonify the body:** Herbal tonics replenish essence, help to support a healthy body's immune function, increase energy and regulate internal body balance. Their tonifying (replenishing) action also helps the body's *qi*, blood, *yin* and *yang*. Most tonifying herbs enter the lung, liver or kidney channels. They tend to be sweet in nature. They are excellent herbs for facial beauty and rejuvenation and they

are used for dull complexions, wrinkles, sagging face, eye bags and dark circles. Commonly used herbs are: *ren shen* (Radix ginseng), *du zhong* (Cortex eucommiae ulmoidis), *he shou wu* (Radix polygoni multiflori), *gang gui* (Radix angelicae sinensis), *sang shen* (Fructus mori albae) and *tian meng dong* (Tuber asparagi cochinchinensis).

Herbs that regulate *qi*: Harmonizing *qi* movement is of tremendous benefit in treating dark spots, facial discoloration, dark eye circles and eye bags. Most of the herbs that treat *qi* stagnation are warm and dry in nature and enter the lung, liver, spleen or stomach channel. Commonly used herbs are: *xiang fu* (Rhizoma cyperi rotundi), and *mei gui hua* (Flos rosae rugosae).

Herbs that invigorate the blood: These mostly enter the liver and heart channels and vary widely in taste and temperature. They work to promote blood flow and open channel systems to move *qi*. As herbal beauty treatments, they're used for treating skin discoloration and roughness, wrinkles and dark eye circles. No herb in this category should be taken by anybody on blood thinners. Commonly used herbs are: *hong hua*, (Flos carthami tinctorii), *chuan xiong* (Radix ligustici chuanxiong), *chi shao* (Radix paeoniae rubrae), *mu dan pi* (Cortex moutan radicis) and *yi mu cao* (Herba leonuri heterophylli).

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