

# CITRUS & PINELLIA FORMULA *ER CHEN TANG*

ORIGINS: *Zhu Dan-Xi*  
during the late Song  
Dynasty (13th Century)

**Citrus and Pinellia Formula (Er Chen Tang)** is also known as Two-Cured Decoction. Though more primitive formulations of **Citrus and Pinellia Formula (Er Chen Tang)** have been around since at least the Han Dynasty (1st and 2nd Centuries, CE), the closest relative to what is commonly used today was popularized by *Zhu Dan-Xi* during the late Song Dynasty (13th Century), regarded by him as the most important formula for treating phlegm accumulation.

## GENERAL SIGNS/SYMPOTMS

Upper Burner: cough with white or clear, easily expectorated sputum, stifling sensation in the chest or diaphragm, and possibly palpitations, dizziness or thirst without desire to drink. Middle Burner: nausea with or without vomiting, focal distension in the epigastrium.

If the condition is long-standing, the complexion may be sallow or dull/ashen. The patient's tongue must show signs of dampness such as appearing swollen, being excessively moist or having a white, greasy coat or the formula cannot be prescribed without modification. Expect a slippery pulse in the right *guan* position or possibly in both the *guan* and *cun* positions on the right. **Citrus and Pinellia Formula (Er Chen Tang)** is such a fundamental formula for correcting damp and phlegm accumulation in the lungs and middle burner, some physicians (*Zhu Dan-Xi*, for example) suggest that if the patient presents with a slippery pulse and a moist tongue, no matter what their chief complaint, this formula can be prescribed to help transform their condition.

## CLASSICAL ACTIONS

1. Drains dampness and transforms phlegm	2. Regulates qi in the chest and middle burner	3. Harmonizes the middle; stops cough
--	--	---------------------------------------

## INGREDIENTS

PINYIN	LATIN	ENGLISH	PERCENT OF FORMULA
<i>Zhi Ban Xia</i> (chief)	Pinelliae Rhizoma Preparatum	Pinellia, ginger-cured	35%
<i>Chen Pi</i> (chief)	Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium	Tangerine Peel, prepared	35%
<i>Fu Ling</i> (deputy)	Poria	Poria, Hoelen, Tackahoe	20%
<i>Zhi Gan Cao</i> (assistant)	Glycyrrhizae Radix Preparata	Chinese Licorice Root, honey-fried	10%

## GENERAL INDICATIONS / MODERN APPLICATIONS

• Bronchiolitis	• Depression	• Goiter	• Retention of food or fluids in stomach
• Bronchitis, chronic	• Diaphragm, stifling sensation in	• Hangover	
• Chest, stifling sensation in	• Dizziness	• Hypersomnia	• Ulcer, peptic
• Complexion sallow or dull	• Drooling, excessive in children	• Insomnia	• Vomiting
• Cough with clear or white sputum	• Emphysema	• Meniere's Disease	
	• Gastritis, chronic	• Morning Sickness	
		• Nausea	
		• Palpitation	

## FORMULA DISCUSSION

The name *Er Chen Tang* translates as "Two-Aged Decoction" or "Two-Cured Decoction," referring to the fact that the two chief ingredients are safer and more effective, not in their fresh form, but once they have been prepared.

Phlegm-dampness forms when the spleen and lung are unable to transform and transport fluids properly. This can arise when an exterior pathogen has disrupted the normal function of the spleen or lung; it can be

**FORMULA ACTIONS**

- Drains dampness and transforms phlegm
- Regulates qi in the chest and middle burner
- Harmonizes the middle; stops cough

**TONGUE**

Excessively moist or with greasy, white coat; may also be swollen.

**PULSE**

Slippery in right *guan*, or right *cun* and *guan* positions

**CONTRAINDICATIONS / CAUTIONS**

This formula should not be used for those whose condition is due to yin deficiency. If they have classic signs of yin deficiency (peeled tongue, thin pulse, 5-palm heat, etc.), do not prescribe this formula. If there is excessive thirst with desire to drink, then do not give this formula; but if there is excessive thirst with no desire to drink, then the thirst is a branch of a root based in phlegm obstruction and this formula will be effective.

**DOSAGE**

Standard dosage is 2-3 tablets, 2-3 times daily.

a constitutional pre-disposition; or it can arise from poor dietary habits. When the two *taiyin zang* (spleen and lung) cannot transform and move the fluids efficiently, the fluids accumulate and partially congeal into phlegm, creating phlegm-dampness. The phlegm-dampness then further obstructs the movement and transformation of fluids by interfering with the qi mechanism of these two organs. The primary action of **Citrus and Pinellia Formula (Er Chen Tang)** is to rectify the qi mechanism that transports fluid. Once the qi mechanism is restored, proper movement of the fluids follows, obstruction is removed, dampness is drained away, and the patient's condition returns to normal.

As the fundamental formula for the treatment of phlegm-damp disorders, **Citrus and Pinellia Formula (Er Chen Tang)** forms the basis for a number of combinations to create other common formulas. Perhaps the best known among US practitioners is the combination of **Citrus and Pinellia Formula (Er Chen Tang)** with **Si Jun Zi Tang** (Four Gentlemen Formula) to make **Six Gentlemen Formula (Liu Jun Zi Tang)**, used for supplementing the qi and expelling phlegm.

**SYNERGY OF INGREDIENTS**

As the name of the formula implies, there are two chief ingredients in **Citrus and Pinellia Formula**, or Two-Aged Decoction (*Er Chen Tang*), prepared pinellia (*zhi ban xia*) and aged tangerine peel (*chen pi*). As stated in the previous section, the main action of this formula is to rectify the qi. Prepared pinellia (*zhi ban xia*) restores the flow of qi by removing the phlegm accumulation that obstructs it; reciprocally, aged tangerine peel (*chen pi*) resolves phlegm by dispersing clumped qi. Prepared pinellia is acrid, warm, has a descending and dispersing action and a slippery texture. The slippery texture is thought to envelop and loosen the phlegm while the acrid, downward-dispersing action drives the phlegm out. Like prepared pinellia, aged tangerine peel (*chen pi*) is acrid and warm—qualities which disperse clumped qi, but instead of being slippery and descending, it is aromatic and bitter. The aromatic quality can revitalize the spleen while the bitterness and warmth disperse cold and drain dampness.

Because poria (*fu ling*) enters all three of the *zang* responsible for fluid metabolism (spleen, lung, and kidney), it has the ability to regulate water passages anywhere in the body. As deputy in this formula it enhances the action of the two chiefs by supplementing the spleen, freeing the water passages and directing fluid accumulation out through the urine. It effectively resolves phlegm because the phlegm in this condition is from the accumulation of congealed fluids. By mobilizing these fluids and restoring water metabolism, the phlegm is not only guided out, but its re-formation is prevented. In addition, poria (*fu ling*) nourishes the heart and soothes the *shen* and so can address secondary issues frequently seen in patients with phlegm obstruction such as palpitations, agitation or insomnia.

The assistant, honey-fried licorice root (*zhi gan cao*), serves to further supplement the spleen and assist the poria (*fu ling*) in its ability to nourish the heart and reduce palpitations and insomnia. So while the two chief herbs are primarily qi regulating and phlegm resolving, the other two substances are primarily supplementing and calming.

## MODERN APPLICATIONS

### Respiratory

#### Chronic Bronchitis – Citrus and Pinellia Formula

(*Er Chen Tang*), modified appropriately, has been shown to successfully treat chronic bronchitis due to damp phlegm in the lungs.<sup>i</sup> One clinical study including 78 outpatients achieved a 92% success rate using *Er Chen Tang* combined with *Ma Xing Gan Shi Tang* (KPC 2870) and appropriate modifications.<sup>ii</sup>

### Digestive

#### Epigastric Pain, Diarrhea, Nausea, Vomiting – Citrus and Pinellia Formula

(*Er Chen Tang*) is combined with appropriate formulas to treat many digestive symptoms. When epigastric and abdominal pain is caused by irregular food intake, food stagnation and cold qi attacking the middle burner, **Citrus and Pinellia Formula** (*Er Chen Tang*) may be combined with either *Li Zhong Tang* (KPC 2970) or *Jian Zhong Tang*.

Diarrhea is a symptom of many disorders. When diarrhea occurs due to dampness, food stagnation and/or phlegm retention, **Citrus and Pinellia Formula** (*Er Chen Tang*) may be combined with *Bao He Wan* (KPC 2060). Other modifications may be more appropriate if there is undigested food in unformed stool with no or little odor. These symptoms indicate middle burner deficiency cold and in this case the spleen must be supported at the same time phlegm dampness is transformed.

**Citrus and Pinellia Formula** (*Er Chen Tang*) may be combined with appropriate formulas to treat nausea and vomiting when due to stomach deficiency cold. Possible combinations would be *Er Chen Tang* combined with *Li Zhong Tang* (KPC 2970), *Si Jun Zi Tang* (KPC 0960), or *Wu Zhu Yu Tang* (KPC 1600).<sup>iii</sup>

### Psychological Disorders

#### Depression – Citrus and Pinellia Formula

(*Er Chen Tang*) may be used in treatment of unsubstantial phlegm clouding the mind and senses, with evidence of substantial phlegm as well. Symptoms include apathy, depression, mental confusion, poor sleep, and excessive sputum. The tongue body may be pale and swollen, with a white, greasy coat. Pulse may be slippery. This pattern is often seen in those with chronic spleen qi deficiency combined with liver qi constraint.<sup>iv</sup>

**SSRI withdrawal herbal treatment** – SSRI (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors) are a class of anti-depressant drugs. A number of symptoms have become associated with SSRI withdrawal syndrome when a patient is coming off the prescription. They fall in the categories of psychiatric, neurologic, motor, gastrointestinal and somatic. A number of these symptoms are a result of accumulation of phlegm-dampness, which is common

with the use of these medications. Qi deficiency or stagnation also complicates these symptoms. **Er Chen Tang** is suggested in combination with **Ginseng and Longan Formula** (*Gui Pi Tang*) to boost spleen qi, calm *shen*, and transform phlegm-damp simultaneously.<sup>v</sup>

### FORMULA COMPARISONS

#### Citrus and Pinellia Formula (*Er Chen Tang*) and Fritillaria and Pinellia Formula (*Chuan Bei Ban Xia Tang*)

Though both of these formulas transform phlegm, dry dampness and can be used to transform upper body damp-phlegm accumulation, there are differences in their applications. **Fritillaria and Pinellia Formula** (*Chuan Bei Ban Xia Tang*) is used specifically to clear lung heat and stop cough caused by an accumulation of phlegm-heat. **Citrus and Pinellia Formula** is too warming to use when there are signs of strong heat, specifically, yellow phlegm. Also, **Fritillaria and Pinellia Formula** is specific to phlegm-heat in the lungs, while it has a relatively weak effect on the middle burner. **Citrus and Pinellia Formula** can treat phlegm-damp in the lungs and middle burner equally well.

#### Citrus and Pinellia Formula (*Er Chen Tang*) and Pinellia and Magnolia Bark Formula (*Ban Xia Hou Po Tang*)

These two formulas have similar actions. The chief difference is that conditions where **Pinellia and Magnolia Bark Formula** is preferred will have more pronounced qi stagnation while those where **Citrus and Pinellia Formula** will be more appropriate will show clearer signs of phlegm-dampness without prominent qi stagnation signs. The etiology for use of these two formulas is also different. In the **Citrus and Pinellia Formula** case history, the condition began with an injury to fluid transformation and transportation. This led to the formation of a phlegm obstruction and the insufficiency of the qi to move out the obstruction. In other words, the spleen qi is weak and requires support. With **Pinellia and Magnolia Bark Formula**, the qi stagnation either preceded the phlegm or else the two components developed separately. For example, the phlegm-dampness may have come from the diet or environment while the qi stagnation came from stress.

#### Citrus & Pinellia Formula (*Er Chen Tang*) and Poria and Bamboo Formula (*Wen Dan Tang*)

**Poria and Bamboo Formula** is directed toward resolving phlegm obstructing the function of the gallbladder, resulting in a buildup of heat and middle burner disharmony with signs of phlegm-heat in the middle.

**Citrus and Pinellia Formula** resolves phlegm-damp accumulation in the middle burner, but because it is drying and warming, it may exacerbate the heat that **Poria and Bamboo Formula** would successfully treat.

**Citrus and Pinellia Formula** (*Er Chen Tang*) and **Phlegm-Transforming Formula** (*Xia Ku Hua Tan Pian*) Though both of these formulas transform phlegm-damp accumulation there are significant differences. **Phlegm-Transforming Formula** addresses long term chronic phlegm-damp accumulation that has progressed to very substantial accumulation involving qi and blood stasis, chiefly in the form of phlegm nodules.

These phlegm nodules could be located in any part of the body: breast, abdominal cavity, pelvic cavity, ovaries, and may include fibroids, enlarged lymph nodes, and more. **Citrus and Pinellia Formula** treats phlegm-damp in a less substantial, less congealed form that does not involve qi and blood stagnation and is generally located in the middle and upper burners.

### USEFUL COMBINATIONS

**Citrus and Pinellia Formula** is one of the most frequently combined formulas today. The following is a small sample of formula combinations for a wide variety of conditions. Please note that in each case listed the normal precautions and contraindications for this formula apply and signs of phlegm-dampness should be apparent in the tongue and pulse.

For treating the symptoms of withdrawal from SSRI's	Combine with <b>Ginseng and Longan Formula</b> <sup>vi</sup>
For epigastric pain due to deficiency cold and damp-phlegm accumulation	Combine with <b>Astragalus Formula</b> <sup>vii</sup>
For GERD, diarrhea or nausea due to damp-phlegm accumulation, with food stagnation	Combine with <b>Stomach Harmonizing Formula</b> <sup>viii</sup>
Chronic bronchitis with cough due to damp-phlegm accumulation	Combine with <b>Restore the Lung Formula</b>
For hot-type influenza with copious phlegm	Combine with <b>Mulberry and Lycium Formula</b>
For environmental toxicity with phlegm accumulation	Combine with <b>Siler and Platycodon Formula</b>
For insomnia, ADHD, excessive dreaming, mania, or explosive temper due to phlegm and heat	Combine with <b>Bupleurum D Formula</b>
For "head wind" causing dizziness, vertigo, or migraines.	Combine with <b>Gastrodia and Uncaria Formula</b>

### ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> Ying, Z., et al., "Treatment of Chronic Bronchitis with Modified Ma Xing Shi Gan Tang and Er Chen Tang," *Journal of Chinese Medicine*, Vol. 24, Issue 1, pp.12-13, 2004.

<sup>ii</sup> Sordyl, A., "How to treat lower respiratory tract disease with the KISS principle," *Journal of Chinese Medicine*, Vol. 77, p. 50, 2005.

<sup>iii</sup> Tian, N., Damone, R., "Zhu Dan Xi's Treatment of Diseases of the Spleen and Stomach," *Journal of Chinese Medicine*, Vol. 40, pp. 25-29, 1992.

<sup>iv</sup> Reid, T., "Depression Towards an Integrated Approach – Part Two," *Chinese Medicine Times*, Vol. 5 Issue 1, p. 6, 2010.

<sup>v</sup> Dharmananda, S., "SSRI Withdrawal Procedure Getting Off Antidepressants May be Made Easier," Institute for Traditional Medicine, Portland, Or, [www.itmonline.org/arts/ssri.htm](http://www.itmonline.org/arts/ssri.htm), 2004.

<sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>vii</sup> Tian, et. al., op. cit.

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*