



News Autumn 2017



Dear Practitioner,

We hope that you enjoy our Autumn 2017 newsletter and that you find the information useful to your practice. There are a number of informative articles in this edition. You will be able to use the piece on psoriasis in considering pattern differentiation with many dermatological conditions. The article on acid reflux will help you to guide your patients away from actions that may aggravate and perpetuate their condition. We are pleased to share more food wisdom from Andrew Serman to assist you and your patients in making healthy food choices and using food as medicine.

Please support your state professional AOM association and encourage your colleagues to be members. It is critical that we are engaged on all levels in order to help create a better future for our profession and affect the way our medicine can benefit future generations.

This newsletter, past newsletters, and the many papers that we have published are posted on our web site for you to use as a resource to support your practice.

We at Golden Flower Chinese Herbs are grateful for your business and support. We are committed to supporting the growth of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine nationally and internationally. We appreciate all of your communication, comments, and feedback.

Sincerely,

John Scott, DOM and Lorena Monda, DOM



Two Great Formulas You Might Not Yet Use

PU JI FORMULA (Pu Ji Xiao Du Yin)

This formula can be used anytime there is swelling and inflammation caused by acute heat-toxins in the neck and throat, and is highly effective when taken at the first sign of sore throat to prevent further illness. Because it can clear pathogenic heat-toxins and relieve throat pain from both bacterial and viral infections, **Pu Ji Formula** is a “go to” formula to treat influenza or common cold manifesting as sore throat with swollen lymph nodes and/or swollen tonsils.

Strep Throat

Strep throat is a common bacterial infection that affects more than 3 million Americans a year. Strep throat manifests as throat pain, difficulty swallowing, red and swollen tonsils (often with white patches), tiny red spots on the back of the roof of the mouth, swollen and tender lymph nodes, and fever. Western treatment for strep throat is oral antibiotics, but for these common bacterial infections Chinese herbal formulas like **Pu Ji Formula** can be just as effective. The general course of treatment is usually 3 to 5 days at an adult dose of 3 tablets 4 to 5 times a day. You will begin to see improvement after the first day. It is suggested to suck on the tablets for a minute or so before swallowing.

Mononucleosis

A modern application for this formula is to treat infectious mononucleosis (mono). Mono is a virus that is commonly known as the ‘kissing disease’ as it is transmitted through saliva. Mono can also be transmitted by cough, sneeze, the sharing of eating and drinking utensils, etc. There is no specific Western medical treatment for mono aside from the recommendations of keeping hydrated and bed rest. While not everyone has signs and symptoms with mono, when they occur they present as fever, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, swollen tonsils, fatigue, and in severe cases pain in the upper left quadrant of the abdomen due to an enlarged spleen. There is no better formula to address this than **Pu Ji Formula**.

Acne

Did you know that **Pu Ji Formula** is beneficial for severe acne? Especially, inflammatory acne that presents with pustules, nodules, and cysts as the primary presentation. This formula can even be beneficial in staving off the formation of long-term scarring associated with this type of acne. Caution: This formula contains cold or cooling herbs. For longer-term use of this formula middle burner support is needed. Combine with formulas like **Six Gentlemen Formula (Liu Jun Zi Tang)** or **Ginseng and Astragalus Formula (Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang)**.

YIN TRANSITION FORMULA**(GENG NIAN AN WAN)**

When patients come in complaining of night sweats and menopausal symptoms, often our initial thoughts go to differentiating between formulas like **Rehmannia and Scrophularia Formula** (*Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan*), **Two Immortals Formula** (*Jia Jian Er Xian Tang*), or **Free and Easy Wanderer** (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*), to name a few.

While these are all good formulas to address menopausal disorders, when the main complaint is night sweating due to menopausal transition there is one clear option. This option is one of Golden Flower Chinese Herbs newer formulations, **Yin Transition Formula**. This formulation is based on a popular patent medicine from China, *Geng Nian An Wan*, which translates to “Menopause Peaceful Pills.”

As a woman enters menopause, there is a natural decline in estrogen levels. This decline, in Oriental medicine, is seen as a decline of yin; and this, in turn, gives rise to deficient heat. **Yin Transition Formula** supplements kidney yin and *jing*, clears heat, and astringes to stop sweating. The focus of this formula is to alleviate sweating, but can be beneficial for other symptoms that may accompany night sweats like hot flashes (very common), fatigue, restlessness, insomnia, poor memory, dizziness/vertigo, mood swings, anxiety, and irritability.

In general, night sweating is usually under control within two to three weeks when taking **Yin Transition Formula**.

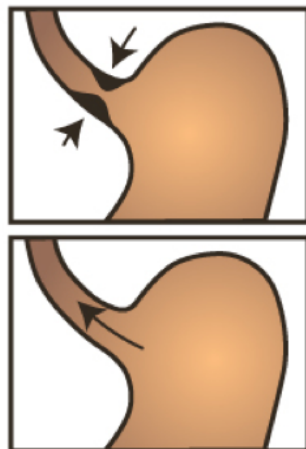
In the future, make **Yin Transition Formula** the first thing that pops into your head when your patient reports night sweats (and accompanying hot flashes).

Herbal Treatment for Acid Reflux

By JAKE SCHMALZRIEDT, DOM

Acid reflux is the backward flow of stomach acid into the esophagus. It is also known as Gastro-Esophageal Reflux (GER). When acid reflux worsens and becomes chronic, it progresses to Gastro-Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD). It is a very common digestive disorder in the US, affecting roughly 20 million Americans on a daily basis. With the availability of OTC's, these numbers are probably under estimated.

The lower esophageal sphincter (the “cardiac sphincter”) is not a valve, but rather a bundle of high pressure muscles that constrict in order to prevent the stomach contents from flowing upward. When functioning properly the cardiac sphincter allows food to pass into your stomach. After the food passes, the sphincter closes. If the



cardiac sphincter does not close properly, stomach acid can flow back into the esophagus, causing acid regurgitation. You may experience a sour/bitter taste or a burning sensation in your chest, known as heartburn. You may also experience abdominal bloating, nausea, vomiting, hiccups, and sometimes difficulty swallowing or breathing. This condition causes temporary discomfort, and if left untreated, can lead to permanent damage to the esophagus.

Western pharmaceutical treatment usually involves relieving the symptoms by neutralizing stomach acid with antacids or suppressing the secretion of gastric acids with H2 blockers like Zantac or Pepcid; severe cases may have to take proton pump inhibitors (PPI's) like Omeprazole.

Dietary risk factors that may contribute to acid reflux include eating close to bedtime, eating heavy meals, eating large quantities of food, eating certain foods like tomatoes, citrus fruits, garlic, onions, and fatty foods, or drinks like alcohol, carbonated soda, coffee or tea. Lifestyle risk factors include smoking and being overweight. Acid reflux can be common during pregnancy. Some Western medications are also prone to causing acid reflux. They include aspirin, ibuprofen, some muscle relaxers, and certain blood pressure medications.

STOMACH ACID — TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE?

Acid reflux increases with age; stomach acid levels decrease with age. As we age, the function of parietal cells, the exocrine cells in the stomach that secrete hydrochloric acid (HCl), decrease and so do the chief cells, the exocrine secretory cells of the stomach that secrete digestive enzymes.

Acid reflux is not a condition of too much stomach acid, but rather a condition of stomach acid not staying in the stomach. Anatomically speaking, it is a condition of the lower esophageal sphincter relaxing improperly, allowing stomach acid to flow back into your esophagus. Acid reflux can occur with any amount of acid; the issue that leads to rebellion lies in the integrity of the cardiac sphincter.

One of the main reasons the cardiac sphincter relaxes improperly is due to low levels of stomach acid. The body's digestive system is designed to keep food (chyme) in the stomach until it reaches the proper pH level. When the proper pH level is reached, the pyloric sphincter at the bottom of the stomach opens and contents move into the duodenum. When stomach acid production is low, food remains in the stomach longer. This builds gastric pressure that eventually needs to be released. The body's response to release the pressure, and the only option, is to relax the cardiac sphincter.

TREATING ACID REFLUX WITH OM

From an Oriental medicine perspective acid reflux is a stomach qi rebellion. The stomach is responsible for receiving the food and then rotting and ripening what it has received. The proper direction of stomach qi is down, and when the stomach qi is righteous, it will, at the proper time

(when the correct pH is reached) descend the turbid along to the small intestine for further digestion and further separation of pure and impure. Stomach qi rebellion is the result of inhibition of this process. Stomach qi rebellion originates in both the liver and the stomach.

Primary Patterns and Formula Suggestions

Liver constraint—Liver stagnation overacts on the middle burner and disrupts the qi mechanism of the stomach, inhibiting the stomach's ability to move downward. This pattern is aggravated by stress. For liver constraint, use **Shu Gan Formula** (*Shu Gan Wan*) to focus treatment on the liver qi stagnation disrupting digestion. This formula is more suitable for acute or sub-acute conditions. The primary focus of **Shu Gan Formula** is to alleviate the excess condition by regulating the liver, harmonizing it with the stomach, and rectifying the stomach qi. For more chronic conditions, use **Earth Harmonizing Formula** (*He Tu Pian*). **Earth Harmonizing Formula** also harmonizes the liver and stomach, but has additional actions to strengthen the middle burner. **Earth Harmonizing Formula** is a more suitable formula for long term use.

Stomach fire/heat—All rebellious or counterflow stomach qi have a fire component. **Zou Jin Wan** (Left Metal Pill) is the primary formula for treatment of stomach fire. The simplicity of this formula makes it easy to add to other formulas for the treatment of acid reflux.

Damp-phlegm in the middle burner—Damp-phlegm in the middle burner obstructs the normal downward flow of qi. Qi is supposed to move; if it cannot go down, it rebels. This pattern is generally seen with spleen qi deficiency. When the spleen is weakened, it cannot support proper transportation and transformation, further facilitating the congestion that burdens the middle burner. Additionally, with spleen deficiency there is the weakening and flaccidity of musculature and tissue, notably, the lower esophageal sphincter. Primary formulas for treatment include: **Ease Digestion Formula** (*Jia Wei Kang Ning Wan*), **Resolve the Middle Formula** (*Jia Wei Ping Wei Fang*), and **Six Gentleman Formula** (*Liu Jun Zi Tang*). These formulas have a focus on drying damp and resolving phlegm while also supporting middle burner qi. **Ease Digestion Formula** is more focused on acute conditions with an emphasis toward clearing the excess. **Resolve the Middle Formula** is a modification of *Ping Wei San*, which has a primary action of resolving damp accumulation. This modern prepared medicinal is modified to more strongly supplement the spleen, harmonize the stomach, and promote digestion. **Six Gentleman Formula** has a governing action of supplementing spleen qi, but contains herbs to help resolve damp-phlegm accumulation.



Food stagnation – Food stagnation obstructs the normal flow of qi and descent of food. **Stomach Harmonizing Formula** (*Jia Jian Bao He Wan*) is a very commonly used formula for treating acid reflux. This formula is especially beneficial for individuals that complain of food just sitting in their stomach, sluggish digestion, bloating after eating, and nausea, along with the acid reflux.

It is quite common to treat both the liver and stomach at the same time. A very common pattern is liver qi stagnation with middle burner cold-damp. Good formulas to consider for more complex patterns include: **Earth Harmonizing Formula** (*He Tu Pian*) (which has been discussed above), **Pinellia Combination** (*Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang*—KPC 1140) and **Bupleurum D Formula** (*Chai Hu Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang*). **Pinellia Combination** (*Ban Xia Xie Xin Tang*) addresses the obstruction and congestion in the *yangming*.

It treats stomach heat as well as middle burner qi/yang deficiency, while also downbearing counterflow qi. **Bupleurum D Formula** (*Chai Hu Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang*) is another formula that effectively unblocks the *yangming*. This formula regulates the liver, preventing it from overacting on the stomach; it supports the middle burner, resolves phlegm, and clears heat. With the addition of the minerals in the formula, it also provides symptomatic relief for the acid reflux.

Stomach Yin Deficiency—One last pattern and treatment option to consider, though not talked about as frequently as the previous patterns, is to support stomach yin. The stomach, when dysfunctional, tends toward deficiency of yin and patterns of dryness and heat. The yin of the stomach includes the mucosal lining that protects the stomach. When the stomach yin becomes deficient, it affects digestion and its ability to protect the stomach walls from damage like ulcers. If the patient is presenting with stomach yin deficiency, use **Linking Formula** (*Yi Guan Jian*). This formula supports stomach yin while also regulating liver qi, and facilitating the qi mechanism of the stomach in the middle burner.

DIET AND LIFESTYLE

Changes in Diet and Eating Habits

Diet and lifestyle changes can have a huge impact in the treatment of acid reflux. Beneficial habits include: eating smaller meals and eating more often throughout the day. This puts less pressure on the lower esophageal sphincter and diaphragm. Eat slowly and chew well. Chewing not only provides the initial breakdown of the food into smaller units, but also allows the enzymes in the saliva to contribute to the chemical process of digestion. Thorough chewing effectively breaks down food, creating a larger surface area, and prepares the food so that it is easier for the stomach to receive it. Additionally, chewing thoroughly also reduces esophageal stress. This aids your stomach, making it easier

to start the digestive process. Have your last meal early; do not eat late in the evening or before bed. A general rule is to eat four to five hours before bed. Digestion energy is weakest after 7 p.m. and eating late interferes with the body's attempt to detoxify the blood. Avoid overeating as it will put too much pressure on the lower esophageal sphincter. Do not lie down right after eating. This inhibits the stomach's ability to descend. A light stroll after dinner is always good, as the movement activates qi regulation and aids in digestion.

Foods to Remove from your Diet

Reduce or remove alcohol, as it relaxes the muscles, including the lower esophageal sphincter. Caffeine in the form of coffee and tea has a relaxing effect on the cardiac sphincter, resulting in the counterflow of stomach acid. Limit raw foods, as they can put more of a strain on the digestive process. Raw foods are attractive because of their high-nutrient content, but they are taxing on the digestion. Spicy foods, tomato-based foods, and citrus-based foods have the function to relax the cardiac sphincter and tend to aggravate reflux. Remove saturated fats and trans fats, sugar, and fried foods, as they can cause the lower esophageal sphincter to relax and delay stomach emptying.

Foods to Add into Your Diet

Probiotics found in fermented foods aid digestion and balance pH levels in the stomach. Very useful foods to add into your diet include: sauerkraut, *kimchi*, apple cider vinegar, kombucha, pickles, and kefir. The addition of lactobacillus acidophilus probiotic supplement can also be beneficial. Some vegetables and fruits that can benefit acid reflux include asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, green leaf vegetables, ginger, bananas, blueberries, apples, and melons. Include healthy fats like avocado, walnut, flaxseed, and olive oil in your diet. A nice alternative to tea or coffee is dandelion tea, which clears heat and detoxifies.

Lifestyle Habits to Address

Quit smoking—smoking affects esophageal motor function. Being overweight increases pressure on the lower esophageal sphincter and its ability to fully close; Losing weight and exercising frequently can be beneficial for the treatment of acid reflux. Do not wear tight clothing like corsets and shaping undergarments, as these can put pressure on the stomach, which pushes upward and creates constant pressure on the lower esophageal sphincter. The pressure can intensify acid reflux. Adjusting sleep positioning can help with nighttime acid reflux. Think about raising your head four to six inches and sleeping on the left side.

A common trigger of acid reflux is stress. Studies have shown that acid reflux is associated with stress, and the severity of the acid reflux correlates with the severity or degree of stress. Addressing chronic stress by using stress management techniques and practices can be very important when treating acid reflux. The use of qi gong, tai qi, yoga, acupuncture, herbal support, meditation,

breathing, good sleep, etcetera, can all aid in the management of stress.

H. Pylori

According to the CDC, roughly two-thirds of the world's population has *H. pylori* (*Helicobacter pylori*). Most people, roughly 80%-85%, do not show adverse symptoms from the presence of the microbe. While there is controversy and differing viewpoints concerning *H. pylori* and whether it is part of the gut microbiota or a bacterial infection, there is consensus that an overgrowth of *H. pylori* causes a chronic low-level inflammation in the stomach. The presence of this organism is linked with stomach issues like acid reflux and stomach ulcers.

Primary treatment for *H. pylori* is to use *Zuo Jin Wan* (Left Metal Pill) to restore balance to the gastrointestinal tract. *Zuo Jin Wan* is a simple formula of two herbs – coptis (*huang lian*) and evodia (*wu zhu yu*) at a 6:1 ratio respectively. This formula treats liver-stomach disharmony. The actions are to clear liver fire and downbear rebellious qi. Coptis (*huang lian*) is the chief herb in the formula, directly entering the liver and stomach, quelling fire. Evodia (*wu zhu yu*) is the assistant herb, used to protect the middle burner from the bitter cold of coptis (*huang lian*). Additionally, evodia (*wu zhu yu*) is used to regulate liver qi and assist in the downbearing of stomach qi.

Another treatment option is to use **Oregano Oil Formula** (*Jia Wei Tu Yin Chen You Jian Nang*). **Oregano Oil Formula** can be used to address bacterial infections because it has a strong anti-microbial action. Oregano oil (*tu yin chen*) has been shown to effectively reduce *H. pylori* colonization. In addition to oregano oil this formula contains Chinese herbs that clear damp-heat-toxin. Within the Oregano Oil Formula, both coptis (*huang lian*) and mume fruit (*wu mei*) have been shown to have bacteriostatic effects against *H. pylori*, with *H. pylori* being the most sensitive to coptis (*huang lian*).

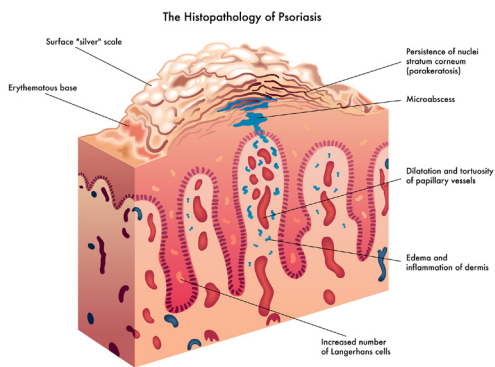
It is important to continue with an after-care treatment plan when addressing conditions like *H. pylori*. This can be done by adding in probiotics and fermented foods to your diet in order to help cultivate and maintain a good and balanced gut microbiota. Other foods that are beneficial to gut flora include broccoli, cabbage and other cruciferous vegetables, bananas, blueberries, garlic, green tea, olive oil, and honey, to name a few. Additionally, removing foods like sugars and processed foods, greasy and fried foods, etcetera, is important to maintain a healthy gut microbiota.



Treating Psoriasis with OM

BY JOHN SCOTT, DOM

As with most, if not all medical complaints that our patients bring to us, it is not enough for the OM practitioner to simply name the disease; we must also be able to identify the underlying pattern. This paper discusses the various patterns commonly seen with patients suffering from psoriatic conditions.



Psoriasis is a common, persistent, chronic and recurrent skin disease with dry, well-circumscribed silvery, scaling papules and plaques of different sizes. Thirty percent of psoriasis patients experience itching.

In Chinese medicine it is referred to as “silver scale disease” (*yin xie bing*). It has also been known as “white dagger sore” (*bai bi*), “pine skin tine” (*song pi xuan*), “snake lice” (*she shi*), as well as other names.ⁱ

Psoriasis affects approximately 2-4% of the white population (fewer blacks and Asians are affected; American Indians and Fijians do not seem to experience psoriasis). It occurs more frequently in colder climates and rarely in warmer regions. The onset or “aggravation” is more frequent in the winter, with decreasing frequency in the spring and fall; the lowest occurrence is during the summer months. Most patients experience the onset before age 20, although statistically the onset appears between ages 10-40. Psoriasis is not contagious,ⁱⁱ but there seems to be a genetic tendency: 30% of psoriasis patients have a positive family history.

Psoriasis can spread rapidly. The normal transit time of the epidermis is 28 days, but in psoriasis cases, this transit time can shorten to as little as 3-4 days. The presentation can vary from 1-2 lesions to a severe outbreak covering much of the body, accompanied by arthritis and the rapid scaling off of dead tissue. The lesions will heal without scarring and do not affect hair growth. Onset is gradual. The course of disease is marked by remissions and exacerbations of varying acuity. When there is itching of the scales with pinpoint bleeding, this is known as “Auspitz sign.” There may be pustules along with inflammation; but they are sterile and do not represent infection.ⁱⁱⁱ

Psoriasis may occur over the entire body, but there are some body parts where psoriasis is more likely to appear. The more susceptible areas are the buttocks and sacrum, hairline of the scalp and the extensor surfaces of the limbs, particularly the knees, elbows and wrists. Less frequently

the eyebrows, axillae, umbilicus and anogenital regions will be affected. Half of patients will have nail involvement.^{iv}

Factors that can trigger a psoriatic eruption include:

- Trauma to an area, known as the “Koebner phenomenon”
- Bad sunburns, irritation
- Topical medications
- Acute upper respiratory infections, especially in children^v
- Emotional or psychological stress^{vi}

In Oriental Medicine psoriasis is considered to be caused by a deficiency of *ying* qi and blood, a condition that stirs up wind, but also dryness that interferes with the skin’s ability to receive nourishment. There will be a disharmony between the *ying* and the *wei* that permits invasion by wind-cold or wind-heat.^{vii} This will cause a disruption in the circulation of qi and blood and allow the pathogenic influences to become trapped in the tissue. In some cases psoriasis may be caused by smoldering damp heat. Wind-heat and wind-cold or damp-heat will transform into heat and consume and injure the qi and blood. Conditions such as blood deficiency and wind-dryness or blood-dryness may aggravate the condition.^{viii} Psoriasis is generated from the inside and manifests on the outside, so accordingly, the treatment must focus on the internal. The pattern of disharmony must be addressed.

The liver and kidney systems are the most affected as the disease progresses. This leads to a disharmony of the *chong* and *ren* channels, which in turn will contribute to even more serious insufficiencies at the *ying* and blood levels.^{ix}

The successful treatment of psoriasis necessitates careful differentiation of the possible patterns. The treatment will demand patience and will most likely require extended courses. We will now explore the various patterns along with the appropriate treatment strategy for each.

WIND-COLD

Psoriasis caused by wind-cold is most commonly seen in children and with psoriatic arthritis.

- There will be pale red lesions.
- The scales are white and thick.
- The scales shed readily when scratched.
- There is usually not much itching.
- It starts or is worse in the winter or is better or disappears in the summer.
- The patient may dislike cold and may have pain in the joints.
- The tongue will be pale with a thin coating.
- The pulse may be soggy and slippery.
- Treatment plan is to release wind and cold and nourish blood and moisten dryness.^x

Herbal formulas for wind-cold:

(It is common to modify and combine formulas in clinical practice.)

Cinnamon Twig Formula (*Gui Zhi Tang*) is used for releasing wind-cold and harmonizing the *ying* and *wei* levels.

Tang Kuei & Salvia Formula (*Si Wu Tang*).

He Shou Wu Tablets (*Shou Wu Pian*) may be added to nourish blood and moisten dryness.

The following herbs may also be added to **Cinnamon Twig Formula** (*Gui Zhi Tang*) to augment the formula:

- Notopterygii radix et rhizoma (*qiang huo*)
- Ledebouriellae divaricatae radix (*fang feng*)
- Paeoniae rubrae radix (*chi shao*)
- Angelicae sinensis radix (*dang gui*)
- Ligustici chuanxiong radix (*chuan xiong*)
- Dictamni dasycarpi radices cortex (*bai xian pi*)
- Ephedrae herba (*ma huang*)
- Pruni armeniacae semen (*xing ren*)^{xi}

Acupuncture points for releasing wind-cold:

Lu 7 (*Lieque*), LI 4 (*Hegu*), moxa at Du 14 (*Dazhui*)

Acupuncture points to nourish blood:

Bl 20 (*Pishu*), Bl 21 (*Weishu*), St 36 (*Zusanli*), Bl 18 (*Ganshu*), Bl 17 (*Geshu*), and Sp 6 (*Sanyinjiao*).

Acupuncture points to moisten dryness:

Ki 3 (*Taixi*), Ki 6 (*Zhaohai*), and Sp 6 (*Sanyinjiao*).

BLOOD-HEAT

Psoriasis caused by blood-heat is red, increases and spreads rapidly. The scales pile up higher on the skin and fall off easily when scratched.

- Intense itching sometimes accompanies blood-heat psoriasis.
- This type of psoriasis is aggravated in the summer.
- The patient may also experience restlessness, thirst, dry stools, have scanty urine, and may dislike heat.
- May be aggravated by consuming fish, spicy foods, and emotional stress.
- The tongue will be red with a thin yellow or white coat.
- The pulse will be rapid, tight, and slippery.^{xii, xiii}

Herbal formulas used to clear blood-heat:

Rehmannia Cool Blood Formula (*Tu Fu Ling Sheng Di Huang Wan*)

Gypsum, Coptis & Scute Combination (*San Huang Shi Gao Tang*)

Tang Kuei & Gardenia Combination (*Wen Qing Yin*)

Acupuncture points to clear heat from the nutritive level, cool the blood, relieve toxin and clear spots:

Sp 10 (*Xue Hai*), LI 11 (*Qu Chi*), Bl 40 (*Wei Zhong*), and P 5 (*Jian Shi*).^{xiv}

BLOOD DRYNESS

Psoriasis caused by blood dryness is pale red. The lesions are moist and are covered by a thin layer of tightly-adhering

scales. The progress is slow, with new lesions appearing sporadically.

The patient may also experience light-headedness, fatigue, insomnia, dizziness, weak limbs and pallor. This person will have a weak constitution.

- The tongue will be pale with a thin white coat.
- The pulse will be thin, thready, and soggy.^{xv}

Herbal formulas used to moisten dryness and nourish blood:

Eight Immortals Formula (*Ba Xian Chang Shou Wan*)

Tang Kuei & Salvia Formula (*Jia Wei Si Wu Tang*)

He Shou Wu Tablets (*Shou Wu Pian*)

Tang Kuei & Tribulus Formula (*Dang Gui Yin Zi*)

Tang Kuei & Gardenia Combination (*Wen Qing Yin*)

Acupuncture points to nourish blood:

Bl 20 (*Pishu*), Bl 21 (*Weishu*), St 36 (*Zusanli*), Bl 18 (*Ganshu*), Bl 17 (*Geshu*), and Sp 6 (*Sanyinjiao*).

Acupuncture points to moisten dryness:

Ki 3 (*Taixi*), Ki 6 (*Zhaohai*), and Sp 6 (*Sanyinjiao*).^{xvi}

BLOOD STASIS

Psoriasis caused by blood stasis is usually dark, hyperpigmented, and covered by thick, hard, and adherent scales. This condition is long-term and recurrent. It is a result of the prolonged disruption of the flow of qi and blood. Lesions may be purple or red and can overlap. They may crack and be painful. The patient may experience some itching and may have thirst without the desire to drink.

- The tongue is purple or red with purple spots and thin coating.
- The pulse will be choppy, tight, slow, deep, and/or uneven.

Herbal formulas used to treat blood stasis:

Invigorate the Blood and Scatter Stasis Decoction^{xviii} (*Huo Xue San Yu Tang*)

Sappan lignum (<i>su mu</i>)	9-15 g
Paeoniae rubrae radix (<i>chi shao</i>)	9-15 g
Paeoniae lactiflorae radix (<i>bai shao</i>)	9-15 g
Carthami tinctorae flos (<i>hong hua</i>)	9-15 g
Persicae semen (<i>rao ren</i>)	9-15 g
Buchnerae cruciatae herba (<i>gui yu jian</i>)	15-30 g
Sparganii stoloniferi (<i>san leng</i>)	9-15 g
Aucklandiae lappae rhizoma (<i>mu xiang</i>)	3-9g
Citri reticulatae pericarpium (<i>chen pi</i>)	9-15 g

Tang Kuei & Salvia Formula (*Jia Wei Si Wu Tang*)

Tang Kuei & Corydalis Combination (*Ge Xia Zhu Yu Tang*)

Acupuncture points to invigorate blood stasis:

P 6 (*Nei Guan*), Sp 4 (*Gong Sun*), Sp 10 (*Xue Hai*), Sp 8 (*Di Ji*), and Ht 7 (*Shen Men*).^{xix}

DAMP-HEAT

Psoriasis caused by damp-heat usually appears as dark red, uneven-sized lesions that have greasy or thick, crust-like scales. Sometimes there are pustules that run together with

crusts and scales on the surface. It occurs more in humid climates. The palms, soles, trunk, extremities and skin folds are the places on the body most likely to have this type of psoriasis. If it occurs at the nail plate they will break, thicken or turn opaque.

The patient may experience disturbed appetite, oppressive sensation in the chest, heaviness in the lower limbs, increased vaginal discharge, high fever, thirst, flushed face, painful or swollen joints, dry stool, and feelings of agitation.

- The tongue will be red with a yellow, greasy coat.
- The pulse will be tight, slippery, and rapid.

Herbal Formulas used to treat damp-heat:

Modified Dioscorea Decoction to Leach Out Dampness^{xx}

(*Bei Xie Shen Shi Tang Jia Jian*)

Atractylodis rhizoma (<i>cang zhu</i>)	10 g
Phellodendri cortex (<i>huang bai</i>)	10 g
Lycopi lucidi herba (<i>ze lan</i>)	10g
Polypori umbellati sclerotium (<i>zhu ling</i>)	10 g
Dioscoreae hypoglaucae rhizoma (<i>bei xie</i>)	15 g
Coicis lachryma-jobo semen (<i>yi yi ren</i>)	15 g
Salviae miltiorrhizae radix (<i>dan shen</i>)	15 g
Lonicerae japonicae ramus (<i>ren dong teng</i>)	30 g
Smilacis flabrae rhizoma (<i>tu fu ling</i>)	30 g
Taraxaci mongolici herba cum radice (<i>pu gong ying</i>)	30 g
Liquidambaris taiwanianae fructus (<i>lu lu tong</i>)	4.5 g
Cyathulae officinalis radix (<i>chuan niu xi</i>)	4.5 g
Citri reticulatae viride pericarpium (<i>qing pi</i>)	4.5 g

Tang Kuei & Arctium Formula (*Xiao Feng San*) for damp heat with wind.

Acupuncture points used to treat damp-heat:

Lv 3 (*Taichong*), GB 34 (*Yanglingquan*), Sp 9 (*Yinlingquan*), and Ren 3 (*Zhongji*).^{xxi}

FIRE OR HEAT TOXIN

Psoriasis caused by fire or heat toxin tends to spread quickly, with the lesions running together. The lesions will be red or purplish or pustular in nature. It may cover a great portion of the body and the face with many scales that flake off easily. The color fades when the skin is pressed.

The patient may also experience high fever, thirst, dry stools, chills, agitation, yellow urine, listlessness, and fatigue^{xxii}

- The tongue will be bright red with thin or no coat.
- The pulse will be wiry, slippery, tight and rapid.

Herbal formulas to clear fire or heat toxin:

Copitis Relieve Toxicity Formula (*Huang Lian Jie Du Pian*)

Gentiana Drain Fire Formula (*Long Dan Xie Gan Tang*)

Coptis, Phellodendron & Mint Formula (*Huang Lian Shang Qing Wan*)

Acupuncture points used to clear fire or heat toxin:

Sp 10 (*Xue Hai*), LI 11 (*Qu Chi*), Bl 40 (*Wei Zhong*), P 5 (*Jian Shi*), and Ht 7 (*Shen Men*).

LIVER AND KIDNEY INSUFFICIENCY

Psoriasis caused by liver and kidney insufficiency is pale red, covered by a thin layer of grayish white scales.

The patient may also experience soreness in the lower back, weakness of the extremities, joint pain, light-headedness and tinnitus.

- The tongue may be swollen with teeth marks and a thin coat.
- The pulse will be thin and soggy.

Herbal formulas that nourish the liver and kidney:

Nourish Essence Formula (*Liu Wei Di Huang Wan*)

True Yin Formula (*Zuo Gui Jia Er Zhi Wan*)

Ming Mu Formula (*Ming Mu Di Huang Wan*)

Gastrodia & Uncaria Formula (*Tian Ma Gou Teng Yin*)

Acupuncture points used to treat insufficiency of the liver and kidney:

Bl 23 (*Shenshu*), Bl 18 (*Ganshu*), Ren 4 (*Guanyuan*), Ren 6 (*Qihai*), Bl 52 (*Zhishi*), Ren 3 (*Zhongji*), Ki 7 (*Fuliu*), Ki 3 (*Taishi*), Lv 8 (*Ququan*), Lv 3 (*Taichong*), and Sp 6 (*Sanyinjiao*).

When there is a more severe pattern of disharmony there may be insufficiency at the level of the *chong* and *ren* vessels. The patient may have symptoms such as impotence and spermatorrhea, irregular menstruation, infertility or even improvement or remission of psoriatic lesions during pregnancy followed by recurrence after giving birth.

To tonify and regulate the penetrating and conception channels, support the yang and harmonize the blood, use **Two Immortals Formula** (*Jia Jian Er Xian Tang*).

Acupuncture points used to tonify and regulate the Chong and Ren channels:

P 6 (*Nei Guan*), Sp 4 (*Gong Sun*), Lu 7 (*Lieque*), Ki 6 (*Fuliu*), Ren 4 (*Guanyuan*), Ren 3 (*Zhongji*), and Ren 7 (*Yin Jiao*).

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ENDNOTES

- ⁱ Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.215
- ⁱⁱ Lin 1990, p.9
- ⁱⁱⁱ Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.216
- ^{iv} AMR'TA from the IBIS 1993
- ^v AMR'TA from the IBIS 1993
- ^{vi} Lin 1990 p.119
- ^{vii} Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.216
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- ^{ix} Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.216
- ^x Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.217
- ^{xi} Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.217
- ^{xii} Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.217
- ^{xiii} Lin, p.28
- ^{xiv} Feit & Zmiewski, p.153
- ^{xv} Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.218
- ^{xvi} Feit & Zmiewski, p.151
- ^{xvii} Feit & Zmiewski, p.158
- ^{xviii} Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.219
- ^{xix} Feit & Zmiewski, p.151
- ^{xx} Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.220
- ^{xxi} Feit & Zmiewski, p.15
- ^{xxii} Shen, Wu, and Wang, p.221



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IN PRAISE OF GRAINS

By Andrew Sterman

With so much food variety today—and so many people's health sabotaged by their food choices—one thing we can count on is a steady stream of food fads. To be more respectful, let's call them trends. To someone following a new trend, of course, it seems totally sensible, the only questions left are, "What took me so long to find this!?" and "What in the world is wrong with everybody else!?"

Personally, I like to study these trends. They can offer some interesting pieces of the puzzle of diet and health—some new research or some new angles. They offer corrections to common excesses (although often introduce their own) and sometimes promote new foods into the marketplace that become fixtures long after the fad has faded.

I often see patients participating in the attempt to avoid grains. A person comes in and as we discuss their diet in relation to their main health concerns. I hear about fish, meat, kale and other vegetables, then . . . nothing. I ask about grains and I hear, "Oh, I try to avoid grains, avoid carbs!" If their pulses are good and they seem healthy, balanced and happy, then that's fine. But too often the spleen-stomach pulses are very weak, sometimes nearly collapsed, with various compensations appearing, such as liver heat; and upon a few more questions, the person describes feeling ungrounded, confused as to why they don't feel well, emotionally rocky—as if any wind that comes can blow their ship precariously off-course. They desperately lack ballast from the grounding energy of grains. Further, whole grains with their fiber give the peristalsis something to work with. For many who avoid grains, peristalsis and elimination have become problematic. For a healthy person, well-prepared grains are grounding, calming, and energizing.

There are times to abstain from grains, either for very specific health reasons or for symbolically withdrawing from the world as part of certain spiritual practices, but Chinese medicine never recommends a single diet for everyone based on broad theoretical grounds, such as 'humans can't digest grains.' For most people, eating grains more skillfully is vastly better than either consuming carbs unaware (sugar, snacks, bread, pasta, pizza) or abstaining from them altogether.

Nevertheless, trends are welcome, it's not good to be too repetitive, and new trends help us think in new ways. Yet, even if grains were as unsuited for human consumption as extremists claim, it simply isn't possible to sustain a Paleo-type diet worldwide, even for those who currently could afford it. There isn't enough grass or grain in the world to feed the cattle needed for more than a fraction of our population to eat this way. Leaving animal empathy aside for the moment, the no-carb plan is available for only a small elite of society, an issue worth serious thought.

Rather than debate strongly held views, let's look at the different grains for their benefits and warnings from the viewpoint of Chinese medicine dietary therapy.

Chinese medicine dietetics does acknowledge potential problems with grains (and also includes voluntary grain abstention as part of advanced spiritual practice). Differentiation is important, however, in order to avoid causing new problems while trying to clear older ones (something we see in our clinics far too often). Let's deal with the warnings for grain consumption clearly and concisely before focusing on their many benefits.

Simply said, individuals with celiac disease must avoid gluten completely. Celiac is an auto-immune condition in which a person reacts to gluten causing inflammation and serious damage. Gluten does not cause the damage itself, rather, the auto-immune inflammation is responsible. Complete abstinence from glutinous grains is therefore important: no wheat, barley and rye. Oats contain no gluten, but cross-contamination in

the field or processing plant is common (safely gluten-free oats are available). The genetic marker for celiac disease is present in about 1 out of every 150 people, although many with the genetic marker do not develop the condition. Further, some without the genetic marker develop celiac (or a virtual twin condition), particularly those with diabetes or other serious digestive weakness. Since confirmed diagnosis requires not only genetic sampling but successful symptom relief during a strict gluten-free trial diet (and nothing other than gluten-free diet is required for disease management) it makes sense to begin with the gluten-free diet and simply enjoy the benefits.

Others have gluten sensitivity. Rather than the permanent gluten-intolerance of celiac, gluten sensitivity occurs when digestion weakens and the gluten from wheat, rye and barley causes a variety of symptoms including lethargy after eating, constipation or diarrhea (often alternating), inflammation, bloating, distention, and so forth. Allowed to continue, the integrity of the small intestine lining can be compromised (increased permeability or 'leaky gut syndrome'), at which point remote symptoms can be traced back to gluten problems. Remote symptoms can include joint problems, allergies, muscle weakness, exhaustion, high blood pressure, repeating cold or flu cycles, irritability, emotional instability, migraine, heart disease, vision problems, hearing problems, and so forth. Although this may sound extreme, following these problems back to gut inflammation in many individuals is direct, logical, and demonstrable.

Individuals with gluten sensitivity improve quickly on a gluten-free diet, as do celiac patients, but the difference is that after time, gluten can be reintroduced (skillfully), although some choose to remain gluten-free. Gluten-free is not the same as grain-free; the benefits of grain for grounding and digestive health can be had with the non-glutinous grains.

GRAINS IN CHINESE MEDICINE

Traditionally, grains are classified as sticky or not-sticky. All glutinous grains are sticky (wheat, rye, barley) and some of the non-glutinous grains are as well (short grain rice, sushi rice, sticky rice, etc.) Non-sticky grains—sometimes called the safe grains—include long grain rice, millet, sorghum, corn and the pseudo-grains buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth and teff. (True grains are all in the grass family: rice, wheat, oats, corn, barley, rye, millet, sorghum. Pseudo-grains are seeds used as grains that are not botanically in the cereal grass family: buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth, teff. In the kitchen, they are all grains.) Further, some grains are warming while others are neutral or even perhaps cooling. The glutinous grains are the principal warming grains, and naturally their use is not advisable for people who tend toward inflammation or heat conditions (even in their best organic or antique versions).

Nevertheless, there are several interesting and game-changing ways of looking at grains as more than just carbs that feed blood sugar levels.

First, grains are the principal foods that not only provide nutrition but resonate with (and strengthen) the organs most directly responsible for basic digestion—the stomach, small intestine, spleen and pancreas. In the *wu xing*/Five Element system, this is Earth, the center of all health. Grains nourish Earth element. Shifting the diet to animal food strongly shifts the energetic focus to liver/Wood Element while reducing support for digestion itself (Earth-center). Liver overacting on stomach and spleen-pancreas is very common; raising protein and reducing grain will make maintaining this harmony even more difficult.

Second, integrating Western and Chinese medical insights here, it is interesting to note that:

- The upper segment of the small intestine (duodenum) has a yin lining

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much like the stomach, capable of handling strong digestive acids. The duodenum further digests meats and allows passage of the amino acids to the liver for synthesis into our proteins. The duodenum, therefore can be seen as an extension of the stomach in Chinese medical terms.

- ♦ The middle section of the small intestine (jejunum) digests and allows passage to carbohydrates and lipids, with crucial assistance of pancreatic enzymes and the microbes in residence. The jejunum can be seen as the location of much of the digestive function of spleen-pancreas in Chinese medical terms.

- ♦ The lower section of the small intestine (ileum) allows fermentation of what is not digested by the duodenum (proteins) and jejunum (carbs and lipids). Here, vast microbial armies create essential vitamins that are absorbed through the ileum walls.

With this in mind, it is clear that diets heavy in protein but light in grains will rely on the duodenum while relatively ignoring the jejunum. The ileum—which perhaps did the most work in early humans with all their rough, gathered wild food—either is relatively ignored, as in the standard modern diet, or fairly well used, if non-nutritive fibers are added. Without grains for the jejunum and whole grains (and other roughage) for the ileum, a high-protein, animal-food reliant diet is not well-balanced from a digestive point of view. Predictably, inflammation and excess heat conditions easily arise.

What to do if grains don't digest well? I recommend a prudent, stepped approach:

- ♦ Reduce or eliminate sugar. (It's not honest to blame grains for problems caused by refined sugar, honey, etc., or over-reliance on refined carbs such as bread and pasta or processed snacks.) Avoid eating sugar after a meal that includes grain—the spleen-pancreas will consider carb digestion unnecessary and leave complex carbs to ferment while absorbing simple sugars for energy.

- ♦ Simplify meal combinations. Manageable combinations are crucial to digestive health; simpler combinations digest more efficiently. Whether we make small changes or enact strict food separations, this powerful method is traditional in Chinese medicine dietetics and can equally be supported by western digestive model thinking. Have desserts only occasionally—sweets after meals throw a wrench into the delicate works, not so much from a calorie point of view as the point made above on added sugar taxing spleen-pancreas function, timing, and eventually integrity.

- ♦ Add sprouts. Sprouts are very important in Chinese medicine dietetics to aid digestion of grains. If you're an herbalist you'll have barley sprouts and rice sprouts on hand, but any sprouts will help. Best is to wilt them in a hot pan to protect the digestion from the cold energetic of mung sprouts (for example) as you gain their benefits.

- ♦ Rotate grains. Grains are staple foods in all cultures, but too much of the same grain can cause stagnation. Rotating (and combining) grains is great for cuisine and health.

If grains continue to be problematic, abstaining from grains may be necessary in the following order:

- ♦ First, avoid wheat. Some people can reintroduce wheat when they become healthier, if so, begin with organically grown (Roundup-free) wheats, and especially the antique wheats: Kamut, farro/spelt, einkorn and emmer.

- ♦ If necessary, avoid the other glutinous grains, barley and rye.

- ♦ Some are allergic to corn. (Most corn today is genetically modified. Insist on organic corn, non-GMO, it is far easier to digest. Our food should not be modified for purposes that are not focused on human health, as is the case with GMO corn.)

It is rare but not unheard of to be intolerant of rice, millet and the pseu-

do-grains. If all grains must be avoided, an individual's digestion-metabolism is severely weakened. Grain abstention and an otherwise careful diet can help rest the spleen-pancreas and small intestine systems. Herbal and acupuncture treatments are advised but not strictly necessary if dietary skills are good. Chances are, however, that there's dietary cheating going on in the sweet-taste department, and overall, what is needed is to strictly avoid sugar and sugar substitutes in order to allow the body to remember how to digest and assimilate energy from grains. This will solve the sugar cravings and the associated symptoms of lethargy, insomnia, brain-fog and so forth.

MAJOR GRAINS AND THEIR BENEFITS

First, the **non-glutinous** or generally safe grains.

Rice—Beyond simply being a food, rice strongly aids digestion—as a very gentle medicinal herb—harmonizing spleen-pancreas and stomach. Steamed rice and congee soothe digestion and are great for generating fluid and yin, thereby supporting the building of blood and hormones. Choose brown rice to help clear stagnation and constipation. White rice is often dismissed, which is a mistake. It is the most soothing grain and helps stabilize diarrhea. Long grain rice is the safest choice. Use short grain or sticky rice only during cold weather; in summer it easily traps heat inside, making hot and humid weather more challenging.

Millet—Millet is very soothing and the most neutral of all the grains. It is eaten whole, and is a good choice for those who want the soothing quality of white rice but desire to eat whole grains. It drains dampness by stimulating urination, but is at the same time hydrating to stomach and yin resources overall. Millet is very important for its anti-inflammatory qualities and helps to soothe gluten damage. Millet is good for yin deficiency, including hot flashes from hormone deficiency, and, because of its high silica content, millet is the go-to grain for helping people repair fractures or maintain strong bones.

Oats—Oats also harmonize the stomach with the spleen-pancreas, strongly aiding digestion. Oats relieve indigestion, constipation, and bloating. Oats treat diarrhea, too—perhaps counterintuitive, but often the intestines need to be cleared of what is offending digestion in order to end a cycle of diarrhea. Oats provide the fiber to do this while also being gelatinous and soothing. Much has been made of the soluble fiber in oats carrying cholesterol out of the system, but oats also improve the way insulin is utilized and can calm the spirit.

Corn—Many people misunderstand corn and diet planners often avoid it, citing its high glycemic index. But sweet corn is a relatively modern development; the long history of corn is about corn as grain (now used for polenta, grits, baking, etc.) I call this field corn or grain corn. In fact, corn regulates blood sugar (guidance and monitoring is needed for diabetics, but its use is possible). Corn is an important grain for regaining weight if emaciated due to illness or surgery. Popcorn is very constipating; better to use wet-cooked methods such as polenta, grits, tamales, etc. GMO corn is not fit for human consumption. (Among other modifications, toxins have been programmed into GMO corn to kill insects during storage.) Corn is one of the foods where organic sourcing is very important.

The warnings for the **glutinous grains** have been mentioned above. Here let's consider their benefits. When using glutinous grains, a corner of your attention must remain aware of their potential problems in order to inform wise food choices, but it's very important to enjoy your food with a free heart and mind. Make wise choices, then proceed to enjoy without second guessing.

Wheat—If wheat is well-tolerated, it is very useful in cool weather; wheat is a very warming grain. Again, wet-preparations are better than dry, but they are rarely used. (Wheat grain broth, for example, is soothing for the emotions and supports restful sleep.) Baking is a dry-cooking

method, and making toast is twice-dry-cooking. Wheat porridge (cream of wheat), couscous or bulgur preparations are better choices. Used this way, wheat can be deeply strengthening: tonifying a weak, sore back with weak knees. Whole wheat treats constipation and hemorrhoids, but too much refined wheat (white flour, bread, pasta) easily leads to dampness. Ancient wheats provide many of these benefits but are easier to digest (and therefore healthier). Early wheats are spelt (farro), emmer, einkorn and Kamut.

Barley—Barley is arguably the original grain that began the agricultural revolution (and thus civilization itself). Today used minimally, barley was, until fairly recently, the principal grain of western culture. Whole barley warms for cold weather, but pearled barley is slightly cooling, better for summer or strongly heated homes. Pearled barley is drying, so much so that it is traditionally used to stop lactation after weaning a baby. Whole barley moistens and soothes; therefore it is very important for soothing oral sores, sore throat, digestive inflammation, constipation and colitis. Both types treat urinary tract infections (UTI), although in slightly different ways. Whole barely 'tea' is a strong diuretic.

Rye—Rye is also a very warming grain—it can grow in inhospitable terrain, bestowing some of its toughness to us as we eat it. Rye is traditionally very important in northern climates with harsh winters. It's good for adrenal exhaustion and helps restore the delicate balance between the stomach (which can be very acidic or fiery) and spleen-pancreas (which suffers when there is excess stomach fire). Rye contains gluten, but far less than wheat, and it has not undergone as intensive a hybridization process.

The **pseudo-grains**. Botanists call them seeds, but grains are seeds, too, after all. Despite differences, the pseudo-grains are used as grains in our diet and digest as grains. None of the pseudo-grains are glutinous.

Buckwheat—Popular in northern Europe and Asia, buckwheat is a warming grain, like rye, barley and wheat (but without gluten). It is not related to wheat. It has a strong moving or invigorating quality and is used in Chinese medicine dietetics to control blood even as it moves blood. It is used to treat heavy menstrual bleeding, varicose veins, and blood in the stool; in other words, blood that is not staying in its healthy boundaries. It is very good for rebellious qi, offering a distinctly descending energetic. I recommend it for reflux, high blood pressure and constipation. Buckwheat encourages things to break up and let go, therefore it is not advisable for those underweight or trying to return to strength.

Quinoa—Native to the Andean mountains, quinoa grows in cool, high altitude and is a warming grain. It is particularly high in protein. It moistens the stomach and intestines and also treats reflux. Quinoa is good for people with dry lips, mouth ulcers, bad breath due to dehydration, and food stagnation.

Amaranth—Sweeter than quinoa and less warming, amaranth is excellent for morning porridge or ground as flour for baking. Unlike the true grains, amaranth's leaves are a widely used vegetable, cooked like spinach. (And like spinach, the leaves contain oxalic acid and therefore provide iron but no available calcium.)

Teff—Teff is the tiniest round grain imaginable and is native to Africa. It has a rich, nutty flavor and very good nutrition profile: high in all essential amino acids, calcium and iron. In Chinese medicine terms, teff harmonizes liver and spleen, a balance that is easily disrupted by poor diet or stress.

There are other important grains, such as **wild rice**. Contrary to popular opinion, wild rice is in the rice family. It is non-glutinous, good for UTI, hydrating, yet clearing. **Job's tears** (sometimes called Chinese barley but unrelated to barley) is an important diuretic. Try it in soup to balance its drying quality. Job's tears treat edema and clear agitation from stress.

All grains have dozens or even thousands of varieties and cultivars. Here

we are looking in very broad terms at the warnings and especially the benefits of grains in the diet. Each deserves a much more detailed discussion—the benefits of grains for health and cuisine are detailed and varied. Most importantly, however, is that all grains benefit digestion and tune the balances between the digestive organs and the other organ systems in ways that are hard to satisfy with a grain-free diet.

THE QUESTION OF CARBS

Why then do so many people have so much trouble with carbs? Simply put, it's from sugar and overly refined grains. Over time, high sugar and refined food will 'burn out' the capacity of our spleen-pancreas to transform and metabolize carbohydrates. When that happens, any grain may trigger problems; a break from carbs under these circumstances may be helpful. But after 1-3 months, it may be time to reintroduce grains, in simple and well-constructed meals.

SOME RECIPES AND INSTRUCTIONS

Rice

Basic rice cooking intimidates many people needlessly. Well-cooked, rice is not a bland accompaniment but rather a feature of a meal. As my kids learned when very young and enjoy repeating as we begin dinner together, "The first bite of a meal should be the grain to let the spleen know that food is coming!"

For steamed rice, use between one and a half to two measures of water to each measure of rice (proportion depends upon the specific rice, how dry it is, and personal preference), bring to a boil, immediately reduce to the lowest simmer and cover with a well-fitting lid. Do not lift the lid and do not stir the rice. Steam rivulets will form between the grains and at this stage stirring or fluffing will disrupt the steam channels, trapping moisture below and making a mess. After 15-20 minutes for white rice or about 35-40 for brown, turn off the heat but do not disturb the lid. Allow it to coast. As the rice gradually cools, the expansive quality within the pot will begin to reverse and the grains will contract a bit, making a perfect balance of holding-together-stickiness and individual grain integrity. After 5-10 minutes of coasting (during which time your other dishes are completed or quick cooking done), serve the rice and its accompaniments (vegetables, beans, fish, meat, mushrooms, whatever you have prepared) as quickly as possible, to give everyone the pleasure of still steaming food. Simply done and executed well, home cooking can provide a freshness and immediacy of stove-to-table that is impossible for any but the very rarest restaurants.

Congee—(wet rice porridge with condiments) is one of the most important dishes to support digestion, hydration and the health of the stomach itself. Beyond simply a good breakfast food, congee is very important for recovering from illness, for digestion support for the elderly, or for any time we may need some extra support after missing sufficient sleep. To make congee (jook in Cantonese), use good quality medium-grain or long-grain white rice, preferably grown in the style suited to the Asian community. Generally, Asia doesn't export grain, so the best choice is one of several high quality Asian-style rices grown in California, much of which is exported to Japan. Fluffy rice types, sometimes called 'Carolina' style, are not best for congee. Also avoid short-grain, risotto, arborio or sushi rices, they are too sticky.

One cup dry rice makes enough congee for 4-6 people. Eventually the amount of water for 1 cup of white rice is 8-10 cups or more, depending on the type of rice, humidity, and cooking style. Begin by bringing 8-12 cups of water to a boil in a separate pot on the stove burner behind the congee pot. Avoid using chicken or bone stocks for congee. (Plain water is most common, but fish or dried scallop stock is a traditional option, adding a subtle saltiness and the influence of the sea as the source of all life.)

1. Put 1 cup uncooked long-grain white rice in large pot. Turn heat to high, add a tablespoon of good oil (grapeseed, organic peanut, safflower,

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etc.) Use a light oil, but always select oils for appropriate energetic and freshness. Stir so each grain is coated lightly with the oil. Add two generous pinches salt.

2. Then, add just enough boiling water to float the grains, perhaps 1 cup (no need to measure). Stir constantly as the grains absorb the water. When almost dry, add more boiling water; keep stirring. After 3 or 4 gradual additions of water while you are nearly constantly stirring (about 10 minutes), the grains will have given up starch to the water.

3. Once the grains have released starch into the cooking water, you can add a lot more water and finally reduce the flame to a “gentlemanly” low simmer for about 30-45 minutes, now stirring occasionally. Do not allow the grains to settle and stick to the bottom of the pot, but constant stirring is no longer necessary. Add water as needed to get the special congee consistency: milky water between discernible rice grains, very soft cooked.

4. Once done, congee is always served with other things—start simply and elegantly with slivered fresh ginger and sliced scallions, a splash of good soy sauce and toasted sesame oil.

5. Eat with simple condiments (scallion, soy sauce, ginger and toasted sesame oil) or improvise more substantial additions: sliced fish, seafood, nuts, pumpkin/squash, corn niblets, soft-boiled or poached eggs, gently cooked bean sprouts, dried scallops, sliced pork, duck, chicken, cilantro, etc., often utilizing leftovers from the refrigerator or contributions from the freezer. Always consider your intention when selecting ingredients, based on your growing knowledge of food energetics and current health needs.

The world is full of excellent rice dishes, and I recommend being comfortable making pilaf, risotto, paella and stir-fried rice as a start. Many health foodies won't go near white rice, but they miss out on its very useful attributes. Most Asians have a similarly strong aversion to brown rice, but they miss out on its delicious flavor and important health qualities. Working with others it's always important to discern aversions and cultural tastes. If brown rice is rejected, recommend black rice or Himalayan red rice—they're not the same but they are whole rices and compliance will be better.

Corn

Corn is the staple grain of Central and South America. From there it spread to North America. Sweet corn that can be eaten on the cob without further processing was developed by Iroquois farmers in the late 18th century. Corn on the cob is delicious in late summer, but grain corn remains a better choice overall. Find nixtamalized corn if possible, and add dishes like grits, cornbread, tamales, corn tortillas and polenta to your grain rotation.

Polenta—Although traditionally polenta is cooked by slowly feeding the measured dry polenta into swirling boiling water, I prefer to prepare it as I do congee: beginning by dry-toasting the grain in the empty cooking pot, stirring over medium-high heat until nearly toasted, then adding just enough oil to coat each granule, still stirring. Then I carefully add boiled water (from a pot or kettle), stirring with a whisk to avoid clumping. The dry-toasting functions to ‘wake’ the grain after its period of storage (and to develop another layer of flavor). With congee, my preference is grapeseed, sesame or an organic peanut oil; for polenta I prefer butter or olive oil.

The tradition is to stir polenta with wood (cooking is finished when the large wooden spoon or palate stands freely in the thickened polenta), but a whisk works just as well. Polenta is done when it doesn't absorb more water so greedily, or, when the subtle undercooked taste transforms into complex sweetness. Times will vary considerably based on the size of the polenta grind: somewhere between 20 and 45 minutes.

Much is made of the way polenta gelatinizes as it cools, allowing it to be

neatly sliced and further cooked, usually baking or frying. At our home, we will do that with leftover polenta the next day, but the focus is on warm, wet-cooked polenta for breakfast or dinner, served with a splash of olive oil (or butter), a sprinkle of finishing salt and perhaps another spice, depending on health needs and what comprises the rest of the meal. (One favorite is a sprinkle of cracked Grain of Paradise, a spicy seed from the cardamom family, *sha ren* for you herbalists.)

Millet

Millet is perhaps the most important food that very few people eat. A dietary patient recently showed me a scholarly paper claiming that millet is unsafe based on cases of goiter in Africa. This argument is a shameful misuse of science—those people were suffering from socio-economically-induced famine where many were forced to subsist entirely on millet and water for months on end. Zero dietary deficiency or excess problems have been linked to millet as part of balanced eating.

Nonetheless, I often hear from millet newbies that attempts to cook it range from disappointing to disastrous. In previous articles (See for example, *Congee and the Importance of Wet, Cooked Breakfasts* in Published Papers under Resources at www.gfcherbs.com) I've described making millet porridge; here are instructions for flawless steamed millet.

Start by purchasing organic millet at a reputable market. Always rinse millet, using the water-flushing method rather than a strainer: put a measure of millet in a pot, cover with 2-3x as much cool water, slosh around to float any dust from the dry storage, then tip the water over the side, letting gravity hold the millet at the bottom. Try not to lose too many millet grains. Repeat 3-4 times until the water runs clear.

Then, strain the millet to rid excess water. Cook directly with 1.5x as much water as millet, like when cooking rice: start with high heat and bring to boil, then turn heat to very low and cover with well-fitting lid. Cook for 15-20 minutes without lifting the lid or stirring the grain. Turn off heat, leave covered, allow to coast 5-10 minutes. Serve as base of meal with vegetables, protein, lentils, etc.

Dry roasting after washing adds yang qi energy to assist spleen yang ascension, thus supporting all digestion. Once washed and strained, return the millet to the pot, turn heat to high, dry stir millet to dry it, then continue dry roasting until it turns slightly tan and offers a pleasant aroma. Then add a fat such as butter, olive oil or ghee. Coat each grain with the oil. Carefully add water (I use hot water from the tea kettle to move things along, carefully minding spatter), turn heat to low, cook as above: 1.5-2 measures of water to 1 measure of millet, cover on simmer, don't stir, let rest after 15-20 minutes cooking. Serve as base of meal.

Further recipes and differentiation of the crucial benefits of grains will have to wait. I recommend methodically exploring grains and cooking methods, familiar and new. In particular, I urge wheat eaters to explore the antique wheats and wet-cooked dishes such as couscous, tabbouleh and semolina porridges.

Understanding the basics of digestion and the foods that support stomach and spleen-pancreas energetics is a game changer. Rather than something to avoid, consider a treat, or relegate to the ‘cheating department’, skillfully selected and prepared grains support the center of health, forming the basis of well-balanced eating.

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