

SHULAN CLINIC – ACUPUNCTURE • CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE

514 Parris wood Rd, Didsbury, Manchester, M20 5QA , Tel: 0161 445 4656 Mobile: 07766 165 608

Asthma - by Prof. Shulan Tang

Asthma is a common ailment. Those who develop it appear to accept the condition and learn to live with it. The problem however is treatable with Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Asthma is an episodic allergic pulmonary disease. An attack is mostly induced by the inhalation of, or contact with dust, germs etc. During the attack, patients have severe dyspnea which is due to spasm of bronchial smooth muscles, swelling of the bronchial mucosa, and hypersecretion of mucus, leading to bronchial obstruction. When the attack cannot be relieved for a long time, sufferers are called "Status Asthmatics". The disease is often seen in children and teenagers. In TCM, it is attributed to the categories of "Xiao" (bronchial wheezing) and "Chuan" (dyspnea).

In Britain there are 3 million people suffering from asthma, of these, 1 million are children, most of whom are living in cities.

Asthma in terms of TCM

In terms of TCM, asthma can be divided into cold type, heat type and deficiency type.

The main symptoms and signs of cold type asthma are:

A feeling of fullness and distress in the chest, dyspnea with a wheezing sound in the throat, coughing with thin sputum, frequent attacks in cold seasons or caused by cold, whitish, moist and glossy fur on tongue, taut and tight pulse. The treatment principle is to ventilate the lungs and expel pathogenic cold, and eliminate phlegm to relieve the asthma.

The prescription is She Gan Ma Huan Tang (She Gan, Ma Huang, Ban Xia, Sheng Jiang, Da Zhao, Xing Ren, Su Zi).

The main symptoms and signs of heat type asthma are:

Dyspnea with wheezing, irritable, oppressed sensation in the chest, even gasping for breath. Yellowish mucoid sputum, thirst, frequent occurrence in hot seasons or onset closely associated with heat, reddened tongue, with yellow greasy fur, slippery and rapid pulse. The treatment principle is based on removing heat phlegm and facilitating the flow of Lung-Qi to relieve asthma.

For this, modified prescriptions of Ma Xin She Gan Tang and San Zi Yang Qing Tang (Ma Huang, Xing Ren, Shen Shi Gao, Gan Cao, Su Zi, Ting Li Zi, Di Long, Sang Bai Pi, Gua Lou Ren, Chuan Bei Mu) can be used.

The main symptoms and signs of deficiency type asthma are:

Chronic and recurrent attacks for a long time, constant minor and persistent asthma at ordinary times, the sound of cough being low and weak, palpitations and shortness of breath, spontaneous perspiration and aversion to wind, general debility, pale tongue with a little fur, deep thready and weak pulse. The treatment principle is based on tonifying the lungs and spleen and improving inspiration to relieve the asthma.

The prescription is the powder of Ginseng and Ce Jie with additional ingredients (Ge Jie, Hua Tou Rou, Mai Men Dong, Wu Wei Zi, Huang Qi, Dong Chong Xia Cao, Bei He, Fu Ling, Chen Pi, Zhi Gan Cao).

Correct differentiation is crucial:

Although there are different types of asthma, as indicated previously, my clinical experience shows that the main types of asthma occur differently in China compared to Britain. There are more cold and deficiency types of asthma in China and more heat type asthma in Britain, due to the different geographical conditions and different lifestyles.

Therefore, when we treat asthma in this country, it is incorrect to copy the asthma prescriptions straight from Chinese books. This is what the chapter "Discussion on Therapies in Accordance with Local Conditions" in "Plain Questions" (Chapter 12) has explained: "Why can a disease be cured with different remedies?" Dr Qi Bo replied: "Geographical conditions are different".

In the old days in China, there were always people suffering from cold and hunger which causes Qi and Blood deficiency. Therefore, Ma Huang Tang and Ginseng are very commonly used for asthma which is described in many classical TCM books.

Nowadays, in Britain, most asthmatics suffer because of high pollen, lack of fresh air, eating and drinking too much high energy, high heat and rich food. This causes excessive heat in the lungs. The Lungs fail to be moist, the patient feels short of breath leading to tightness in the chest, general hot feeling with dry mouth with red tongue and lips. It is usually accompanied by eczema and hay fever, and is worse in the summer.

In this case, if we treat it by using Ma Huang, which has the property of warmth and Ginseng which is a tonic, it may cause the lungs to over-heat and the lung energy will be unable to remain pure and descendant. Therefore, we have to change to prescriptions such as Yin Qiao San and San Ju Yin to clear away lung heat and moisturise the dryness to relieve the asthma.

There is an asthma teabag, (containing Jin Yin Hua, Bei Sha Shen, Gua Lou Pi, Yin Xin, Chuan Bei Mu, etc) available from ShiZhen TCM UK Ltd which has been developed by myself to treat the modern Western type asthma with a fairly high degree of success.

Case history of Heat type asthma:

Katherine, aged 9 years old, who had suffered from asthma for 7 years, first visited me on 8/6/99. She had suffered attacks every week, especially at school when running about or doing sports. When she had attacks, she was out of breath, had a pink complexion, very red lips, and was thirsty all the time.

She was also feverish, short-tempered, easily upset, tired, had difficulty in getting to sleep, normal appetite, slightly constipated and had a red tongue with no coating on it. She liked eating chocolate, did not like fruit and vegetables and had to use her inhaler up to 4 times a day.

This asthma was due to lung heat caused by incorrect diet. I prescribed 6 asthma tea bags for one week and asked her to stop eating chocolate, cheese, milk, chips and crisps and to eat more pears, radish and other fruits and vegetables.

During her second visit one week later, on 16.6.99, she told me she had no attacks that week, generally felt cooler and happier, had slept better and had more energy. After another two weeks treatment using asthma tea bags she was getting better all of the time, and could do sports just like normal children without using her inhaler.

For a further 2 months she used 1 teabag over 2-3 days to generally clean and moisten the lungs. After this period, she did not take the tea bags for over a year. Recently, her father came to my clinic for treatment himself and told me that Katherine has not had any asthma attacks during this year, and was a much happier child as a result.



Chinese Herb – Ban Bian Lian (*Lobelia chinensis*)