

SHULAN CLINIC – ACUPUNCTURE • CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE

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Hair Tonics & Chinese Herbs

– by Prof. Shulan Tang

Four years ago I wrote an article for Qi Magazine called "Healthy Hair & Traditional Chinese Medicine." It elicited a lot of response from readers, confirming that many people suffer from alopecia, falling hair or dry hair conditions. People of all ages are affected from as young as four years old.

The classical TCM book Yellow Emperor says "The kidney determines the condition of bone and marrow, and has its manifestation in the hair of the head". Literally, the function of the kidney is reflected in the glossiness of the hair.

Therefore, if there is Deficiency of the Essence of Kidney, it means the kidney essence is not sufficient to nourish the hair and this can cause falling hair or alopecia. This type of problem is usually seen in children before puberty or adults over forty. The reason it can affect children is that in girls younger than fourteen and boys younger than sixteen, the kidney Qi is not fully developed. Also the kidney essence reduces to half its optimum level after the age of forty. The treatment for both children and adults in these groups is mainly to tonify the kidney essence to nourish the hair. For this, Fu Fang Shou Wu Wan is the correct formula.

Stress is another main cause of losing hair. This problem is mainly seen in middle-aged men and women. I participated in an important health conference recently and glancing around, I recognised in the audience four former presidents of the host organisation. All were middle-aged men between thirty-five and forty years old. Two of them were almost bald and the other two had very thin hair with balding patches on top. One of them was sitting in front of me, so I wrote a message and passed it to him. 'The 101 hair tonic may help your hair a lot if you are interested in it'. He looked around, smiling and nodding approvingly, gave me the thumbs up. He meant, 'Great, thank you'

The 101 hair tonic is a popular Chinese herbal formula for alopecia. The main ingredients are ginseng, angelica root and wolfberry fruit. Its function is to warm the channels, expel the wind and eliminate dampness, which in turn promotes blood circulation. 101 tonic also tonifies the Qi and blood, which nourishes the scalp, reducing falling hair and stimulating hair growth. Additionally those with alopecia or hair loss can use 101 Nourishing Shampoo to further improve the condition of their hair. The shampoo contains various effective herbal essences and the latest natural active agent that serve to nourish and maintain softer, smoother and shinier hair.

A thirty-nine year old lady with severe falling hair, presented at my clinic. The problem had started in 1997 when a large bomb exploded in Manchester city centre. The lady was not adequately insured, and on top of the shock she suffered severe financial loss. The lady became very stressed as a result. She couldn't sleep and her hair started falling out. I gave her Xia Yao San and Gui Pi Tang medication, which stopped the hair loss.

However, by the time she came to me, three large bald patches had developed, as big as my palm, that were hardly growing any new hair. I prescribed 101 hair tonic lotion, and told her to rub it into her scalp twice a day. One month later a significant growth of new hair could be seen on the bald patches.

Another main cause of hair loss is blood deficiency, often seen in people suffering from anaemia. The herbal formula Yang Xue Sheng Fa Jiao Nang can nourish the blood and help the hair to grow back.

Recently an eighteen-year-old girl came to my clinic. She had started menstruating at fourteen and was gradually losing her hair. Her periods had always been difficult with heavy blood loss. The girl was unable to take raw herbs or powder and could not cope with any bad taste. She was generally afraid of medicine. She could only take one capsule of Yan Xue Shen Fa Jiao Nang a day. In addition to the one capsule, she used 101 hair tonic regularly. Three weeks later the front of her hair, which had been falling badly, was getting thicker. She continues to use 101 hair shampoo and enjoys nice shiny long black hair.

Another common cause of hair loss is Blood Heat. The condition agitates the scalp causing dry and falling hair. This type of problem is mostly seen in people who suffer from eczema or psoriasis on their scalp. They have a heavy, thick, flaky, itchy scalp that can also bleed. The scalp feels hot or burning, and the person generally feels thirsty and irritable.

A twenty-two year old lady had psoriasis on her scalp for ten years, before she came to me. Her scalp was hot, dry, itchy and bleeding. Her hair was dry and withered and she was bald on top of her head. In this case the blood must be cooled, but there is no need to tonify. The scalp needs to be nourished in order to help the hair grow and to improve its general condition.

I prescribed Jin Ju Di Dan Wan to cool the blood, Dan Fang Shou Wu Wan to nourish the hair for her and Liu Wu Xie Ye shampoo, which is particularly suitable for scalp psoriasis and dry hair. I asked her to use the shampoo every day. Three months after starting treatment, the scalp psoriasis had completely gone, with no itching or bleeding remaining. Six months later, her hair is growing back and is thick, healthy and shiny. She also looks bright and happy.