

# Understanding Chinese Herbs

## About Chinese Herbs:

Traditional Chinese Herbal Medicine consists of 5,767 substances derived from plant, animal, and mineral sources. The use of these substances can be traced back to 1,000 BC. Over the past 3000 years, an incredibly rich and powerful system of medicine has been created. During this time, classical herbal formulas that are effective for many health concerns have been developed. The herbs are available in the form of herbal teas, liquid extracts, tablets, capsules, granules, lotions, creams, salves or poultices.

## What is a Chinese Herbal Formula?

Individual substances are rarely prescribed alone in Traditional Chinese Medicine. A carefully balanced recipe of several different herbs is specifically tailored for each person's entire health condition. Each herb is chosen for its own specific functions. In addition, herbs can enhance the strengths and reduce the side effects of each other. The combination of substances in a formula creates a new therapeutic agent that can treat much more effectively and completely than a single substance.

## What is the difference between Western Herbs and Chinese Herbs?

Western Herbal Medicine tends to use one or two herbs to treat just a specific symptom. A Chinese Herbal Formula has as many as 20 different herbs. The herbs are selected to work synergistically to treat the whole person. In Chinese Medicine, due to our diagnostic system, we are able to assess a person's whole constitution (the health of their whole body) and treat the root (or cause) of a health concern along with a branch (or the symptoms) of a health concern. It is in this way that we are able to treat a person's whole body and mind, rather than just a symptom.

## Safety of Chinese Herbs:

One of the most appealing qualities of Chinese Herbal Medicine is the low risk of adverse reaction or side effects. Herbal medicine uses all the constituents of the plant, including cellulose. The herb is completely balanced, and therefore has minimal side effects.

The most commonly reported adverse reaction is minor gastrointestinal upset. Modifying the herbal formula or adding herbs to strengthen the digestive system can remedy this. If you notice anything that you perceive to be side effects, please stop taking your herbs and consult your herbalist right away.

**If ever you begin to feel that you are getting a cold, it is best to stop taking your herbal prescription and speak with your Acupuncture Physician about a more suitable formula for you at that time.**

(Adapted from Acupuncture.com)