

ANALGESIA; THE SEARCH FOR EFFECTIVE PAIN RELIEF BOTANICAL AND NUTRITIONAL PROTOCOLS

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Physical pain can range from mildly annoying to crippling in its intensity. Pain can be localized or body-wide and can be acute, recurrent or chronic in nature. The search for effective pain relief predates humankind and is a continual area of research and experimentation by physicians, drug companies, pain sufferers and other healthcare providers.

The area of medicine specializing in this is known as pain management or algia. Orthodox and CAM techniques for controlling pain include the use of pharmaceutical medications (opiates, NSAIDs, antidepressants, muscle relaxants, acetaminophen, anticonvulsants and, more recently, medical marijuana), body-mind techniques (biofeedback, hypnosis, cognitive behavioral therapy, meditation), physical/structural approaches (chiropractic, osteopathic or naturopathic manipulation, TENS, yoga, tai qi, massage, physical therapy and acupuncture) and medical/surgical procedures (nerve ablation, spinal cord stimulators, nerve blocks). Despite the usefulness of all of these medications and techniques, there is still significant under-treatment of moderate to severe pain, especially in people of color, women, the elderly and the poor (Anderson, et al, 2009). One of the reasons for under-treatment is that physicians who treat chronic pain are faced with a major dilemma. The most effective analgesics are the opiates (morphine, codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, fentanyl, methadone). Unfortunately, they are also highly addictive with long-term use, have significant adverse effects (constipation, drowsiness, nausea and vomiting) and high doses can lead to overdose and death. Recently the FDA (March 22, 2016) increased warnings about the entire class of opiate medications. They noted potential interactions with antidepressants and migraine medications causing Serotonin syndrome, they can cause serious adrenal insufficiency and decrease the production of sex hormones (FDA, 2016). In addition, a disturbing animal study found that opiate use, while relieving pain, actually dramatically prolongs neuropathic pain by increasing inflammation and preventing the body from resetting to normal pain sensitivity (Grace, et al, 2016). Other pain medication such as NSAIDs are less effective than opiates and can also cause significant adverse effects, including gastric irritation and bleeding with aspirin or ibuprofen. NSAIDs are also linked to increased risk of asthma and regular use of COX-2 inhibitors increase the risk of heart attacks. Acetaminophen (an analgesic that is not an NSAID) is a major cause of liver damage.

In the herbal materia medica most of the strong-acting analgesics have already been turned into pharmaceuticals (Opium Poppy ⇒ opiates, Coca ⇒ cocaine), have significant toxicity (Gelsemium or Aconite) or are illegal in most states (Cannabis). This leaves herbalists with milder-acting analgesics that, in general, are less effective than pharmaceutical medications. While this is true “in general”, the area where botanicals excel is treating specific types of pain. We focus on where the pain occurs (head pain, musculoskeletal pain, menstrual pain, nerve pain, urinary tract pain, etc.) and the nature of the pain (sharp and stabbing, dull and throbbing, peripheral nerve pain, spasmodic pain, etc.). This allows us to target and manage the pain with milder, less heroic therapies while improving efficacy. In addition, in herbal traditions throughout the world, the use of single herbs is almost unknown. The norm is a complex formula that fit the person being treated. Skilled combining of herbs creates a synergy of activity and the combined use of analgesics, antinociceptives, antiinflammatories and antispasmodics (in some cases nervines, antidepressants or anxiolytics may also be used) reinforces the therapeutic effects and improves outcomes.

MATERIA MEDICA FOR PAIN RELIEF

ANALGESICS

Bai Zhi root (*Angelica dahurica*) – is used in TCM for wind/damp arthritis, lumbago and sciatica, as well as frontal or sinus headache pain. It is most often combined with Corydalis, as it increases absorption of the alkaloid dl-THP (Liao, et al, 2010). A common Chinese patent medicine Yuanhu Zhitong, which is an effective analgesic, is made from these two herbs. Bai Zhi is also used topically for toothache pain.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried root, 8 oz. water, decoct 10 minutes, steep covered 40 minutes, take 4-8 oz.

2-3x/day

Tincture (1:5): 1-2 mL TID/QID

Black Cohosh root (*Actaea racemosa*) – is an analgesic and antispasmodic used by the Eclectic physicians for what they called muscular arthralgia, today we know it as fibromyalgia. It is effective for treating dull, deep-seated muscular pain. It can also be useful for muscle pain due to influenza, sciatica, intercostal pain, headaches where the scalp muscles are sore and tender, back pain, as well as uterine, ovarian and testicular pain.

Dose: Tea: 1/2 tsp. dried root, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep 45 minutes, take 4 oz. 2x/day

Tincture (1:2): .5-1 mL (10-20 gtt.) TID

Chinese Clematis root/Wei Ling Xian (*Clematis chinensis*) – is a powerful analgesic, antiinflammatory and antispasmodic, used for wind/damp pain. This includes arthritis (worse with damp weather), low back pain, sciatica, muscle spasms, SI joint pain, restless leg syndrome, plantar fasciitis and torticollis. The leaf of a weedy American species of Clematis, Virgin's Bower (*C. virginiana*), is useful for treating deficient/cold migraines.

Dose: Tea: 1/2-1 tsp. dried root, 8 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep for 30 minutes, take 4 oz.

3x per day

Tincture (1:5): 1-1.5 mL TID

Corydalis tuber/Yan Hu Suo (*Corydalis yanhusuo*) – is one of the most effective analgesics in the Chinese materia medica. It is used to treat pain caused by blood stagnation (angina, endometriosis, dysmenorrhea or ovarian cysts). It is effective for treating acute inflammatory or neuropathic pain (Wang, et al, 2016), it can be used orally and topically for pain due to trauma (bruises, sprains, whiplash), as well as nerve pain (sciatica, trigeminal neuralgia and migraines). In TCM Corydalis is usually combined with Angelica dahurica/Bai Zhi, which dramatically increases the absorption of the chemical dl-THP (considered the most active analgesic constituent in Corydalis). Yan Hu Suo also has antispasmodic activity and is used to treat back and neck pain or spasms, spasmodic headaches and gallbladder spasms (with Celandine and Cyperus). I also use Corydalis (40%) with Indian Pipe (40%) and Bai Zhi (20%) for treating cancer pain (see Indian Pipe under antinociceptives).

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried rhizome, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep 1 hour, take 2-4 oz. 3-4x/day

Tincture (1:4 or 1:5): 1-2 mL QID

For terminal cancer pain, mix Corydalis (40%), Indian Pipe (40%) and Bai Zhi (20%). Take 5-10 mL every 3-5 hours.

Cyperus tuber/Xiang Fu (*Cyperus rotundus*) – is used in TCM for abdominal pain, especially dysmenorrhea, gallbladder pain, ovarian or uterine pain, testicular pain, intestinal pain or spasm, angina, costochondritis, hernia pain, bilious colic, intercostal pain (use it with Pleurisy root, Black Haw and Wild Cherry bark) or painful breasts.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. powdered, dried tubers, 8 oz. water, decoct 10-15 minutes, steep covered 1 hour, take 2 cups/day

Tincture (1:5): 2-3 mL TID/QID

Devil's Claw tuber (*Harpagophytum procumbens*, *H. zeyheri*) – is a South African herb with analgesic and antiinflammatory activity which has become popular in Europe for relieving arthritis pain. Human clinical trials show it is effective for relieving osteoarthritis (Warnock, et al, 2007; Wegener, et al, 2003; Chantre, et al, 2000) and neuralgia (Chrubasik, et al, 2003). It is also used to treat bursitis, tendonitis, rheumatoid arthritis and lumbago. This is a threatened species in the wild, and only cultivated Devil's Claw should be used.

Dose: Tea: 2 tsp. dried tuber, 10 oz. water, decoct 20 minutes, steep for 40 minutes, take 2-3 cups/day

Tincture (1:5): 3-5 mL

Tablet: Standardized extract: 2000 mg BID

Dogbane root (*Apocynum cannabinum*) – is a low dose herb (potentially toxic) used to treat sciatica or arthritis of the lumbar spine or SI joints with edema. It is usually used with St. John's wort, Teasel, Sweet Melilot or Prickly Ash.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried root, 8 oz. water, decoct 10 minutes, steep 20 minutes, take 1 oz. TID

Tincture (1:2.5): .25-.50 mL (5-10 gtt.) TID

Gambir spines/Gou Teng (*Uncaria sinensis*) – is used in TCM for treating liver wind patterns (spasm, irritability, tremors, numbness, migratory pain). I find it useful for muscle spasms, insomnia due to restless leg syndrome or pain, trigeminal neuralgia, angina pain and headaches with red, painful eyes.

Dose: Tea: 1-2 tsp. dried stems, 8 oz. water, decoct 5 minutes, steep 1 hour, take 4 oz. 4x/day
Tincture (1:4 or 1:5): 1-2 mL TID

Gelsemium herb (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) – is a very powerful, low-dose (potentially toxic) herb. It needs to be used with caution and only by well-trained clinicians. It is used (with other herbs) for severe headaches (migraines) where the entire head hurts, the eyes are bright and shiny, with an almost manic affect. The head is red and feels hot. Gelsemium can also be used for intense ovarian, facial nerve and endometrial pain.

Dose: Tincture (1:3): 20-30 gtt in 4 oz. water, mix and take 1 tsp. every 2-3 hours. (Neiderkorn)
Tincture (1:10): 1-3 gtt TID diluted in water. (Mitchell)

Gum Guggul (*Commiphora mukul*) – has analgesic, antiinflammatory and antispasmodic activity. It is used in Ayurvedic medicine for treating arthritis, gout, sciatica and lumbago. I find it most effective for what in TCM would be called cold/damp (stiff, achy muscles worse with cold or dampness) or wind/damp patterns (spasmodic or shifting pain with edema).

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. powdered dried resin, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep covered 1 hour, take 4 oz. 3x/day
Tincture (1:4 or 1:5): 1-2 mL TID

Horse Chestnut seed (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) – is indicated for dull, throbbing pain, especially with edema or impaired circulation to the tissue or organ. It can help relieve cold/damp arthralgias, sciatica, pain due to varicose veins or deep vein thrombosis, lumbago, back pain, hemorrhoids, intermittent claudication, Raynaud's syndrome and Buerger's disease. I have also used it successfully to reduce pain caused by ovarian neuralgia, trauma injuries and sacral/SI joint pain.

Dose: Tincture (1:2): .25-.75 mL TID
Capsules: A standardized product (16-20% Escin) has been used in several studies with a dose of 300 mg. of the extract every 12 hours.

Jamaica Dogwood bark (*Piscidia piscipula*) – is one of our strongest, non-narcotic herbal analgesics. It is highly useful for moderate to strong nerve pain, spasmodic pain or musculoskeletal pain. It is used for severe dysmenorrhea, TMJ pain, supraorbital neuralgia, brachial and facial nerve pain, migraines, whiplash and painful functional ovarian cysts. It is important to be sure what you get from a supplier is actually *Piscidia*, as this herb is often adulterated.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried c/s bark, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep 45 minutes, take 2 oz. 4x/day
Tincture (1:5): 1-2 mL TID/QID. For acute pain, 3 mL every 3-4 hours

Ligusticum root/*Chuan Xiong* (*Ligusticum chuanxiong*) – enhances circulation and “moves congealed blood”. It is used with other blood moving herbs (Safflower, Dang Gui, Myrrh, Frankincense, Dan Shen, etc.) to relieve dysmenorrhea, vaso-constrictive headaches (wind/damp or wind/cold), cold/damp arthritis and Lyme arthralgias. It can also be used with St. John's wort, Prickly Ash and Sweet Melilot for treating nerve pain (sciatica, brachial nerve pain) and headaches caused by head trauma.

Dose: Tea (Infusion): 1-2 tsp. dried root, 8 oz. water, steep covered for 30-40 minutes, take 2-3 cups/day
Tincture (1:5): 2-3 mL (40-60 gtt.) TID/QID

Magnolia bark (*Magnolia spp.*) – various species of *Magnolia* are used in Native American and Chinese medicine. The bark is a very effective analgesic and antiinflammatory used for hot/damp arthritis (inflammatory arthritis), as well as wind/damp arthritis (spasmodic, migratory pain with edema). For hot/damp arthritis it can be combined with Sarsaparilla, Chinese Clematis or Gotu Kola. For wind/damp arthritis I often use it with Teasel, Bai Zhi or Chinese Clematis.

Dose: Tea: 2-3 tsp. dried bark, 16 oz. water, decoct 15-20 minutes, steep 1/2 hour, take 4 oz. BID/TID
Tincture (1:5): 1.5-2.5 mL BID/TID

Mistletoe herb (*Viscum album*) – the Eclectic physicians used this parasitic plant as a remedy for intense rheumatic or neuralgic pain that feels like the tissue is being torn. It can also help relieve vascular headaches with a flushed face and a feeling of fullness in the head, combined with Feverfew, Gambir and Jamaica Dogwood.

Dose: Tea: 1/2 tsp. recently dried herb, 8 oz. water, steep for 1 hour, take 2 oz. TID
Tincture (1:5): 1-2 mL TID

Notopterygium/Qiang Huo (*Notopterygium incisum*) – is widely used in TCM for pain due to wind/cold or wind/damp. It can be effective (as part of a formula) for occipital headaches (with Siler, Kudzu, Horse Chestnut and Passion Flower), especially if the pain feels dull and heavy. The root is also used to treat muscle pain caused by wind/cold and/or dampness. It is most effective for dull, throbbing muscle pain in the head, neck, shoulders and upper back. It is contraindicated for pain due to heat, yin or blood deficiency. Combining it with carminatives helps prevent it from causing nausea.

Dose: Tea: 1/2 tsp. dried root, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, take 4 oz. BID/TID

St. John's wort flowering tops (*Hypericum perforatum*) – contrary to popular belief, St. John's wort is not "the depression herb". While it can be useful for some types of depression (GI-based or hepatic depression and SAD), traditionally it is best known for treating nerve pain. It is highly effective for treating brachial nerve pain, RSD, peripheral neuropathy, spinal and head injuries, as well as trauma pain and post-herpetic neuralgia (topically as well as orally). Hypericum also has antiinflammatory and antinociceptive activity and can also be useful for urinary tract, gastrointestinal and migraine pain.

Dose: Tea: 2 tsp. dried flowers/buds, 8 oz. hot water, steep covered for 45 minutes, take 4 oz. 4x/day
Tincture (1:5 or 1:2): 2-3 mL TID/QID

Sweet Melilot herb (*Melilotus spp.*) – is indicated for sharp, stabbing pain no matter where it occurs. It can be an effective treatment for optic neuralgia, TMJ pain, sciatica, brachial nerve pain, ovarian neuralgia or migraines (that feel like "being stabbed by a knife").

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. recent dried herb, 8 oz. hot water, steep covered for 1 hour, take 4 oz. 2-3x/day
Tincture (1:2.5): 1-2 mL BID/TID

White Peony/Bai Shao Yao (*Paeonia lactiflora*) – is used in TCM as an analgesic, antiinflammatory, antispasmodic and blood tonic. It dispels liver wind pain (spasmodic pain) including abdominal pain, torticollis, angina, rectal spasms (use it with Jie Geng/Platycodon), Trigeminal neuralgia and migraines (use it with Kudzu and Ligusticum root). I find it very effective for fibromyalgia pain (use it with Ashwagandha, Black Cohosh and Kava), menstrual cramps and painful breasts (for mastodynia/mastalgia, use it with Cyperus, Chaste Tree, Figwort or Fritillaria/Zhe Bei Mu).

Dose: Tea: 1/2-1 tsp. dried root, 10 oz. water, decoct 10 minutes, steep 40 minutes, take 4 oz. 3x/day
Tincture (1:4 or 1:5): 1.5-2.5 mL TID

Willow bark (*Salix spp.*) - has been studied in human clinical trials and found to relieve mild to moderate pain due to backaches and osteoarthritis (Vehleke, et al, 2013; Beer & Wegener, 2008; Chrubasik, et al, 2001; Schmid, et al, 2001). *Salix alba* (White Willow) is the species usually used, but this is rather odd as it has the lowest levels salicylates of any species of Willow bark. Willow bark can be used similarly to aspirin, but it is slower to take effect and milder in action, yet its effects persist significantly longer. Willow bark is most appropriate for hot/damp musculoskeletal pain.

Dose: Tea: 1-2 tsp. dried bark, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep for 40 minutes, take 4 oz. 4x/day
Tincture (1:5): 2-4 mL TID/QID

Wintergreen herb (*Gaultheria procumbens*) – is the richest source of salicylates in the vegetable kingdom. It was used by the Eclectic physicians for genitourinary tract pain, inflammation and infections. It is an effective remedy for dull, achy pain in the bladder, urethra, prostate or seminal vesicles (use it with Kava and Horse Chestnut). It has also been used orally and topically to relieve pain due to headaches, arthritis, overworked muscles, hemorrhoids and toothaches.

Dose: Tea (Infusion): 2-3 tsp. dried leaf, 8 oz. hot water, steep covered for 40 minutes, take 2-3 cups/day
Tincture (1:2): 1.5-2 mL QID

Yucca root (*Yucca spp.*) – contains saponins, which have analgesic and antiinflammatory effects. In a human clinical trial, Yucca has been shown to help relieve osteoarthritis pain (Cheeke, et al, 2006) especially in the knees or hips. Yucca can also be used with Kava, Hydrangea, Hops or Khella for kidney stone pain.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried c/s root, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep for 20 minutes, take 4 oz.
3x per day
Tincture (1:5): 1-2 mL TID

ANTINOCICEPTIVES

Antinociceptives are herbs that inhibit the sensation of pain by increasing the pain threshold or blocking the sensory neurons from detecting painful stimuli.

Ashwagandha root (*Withania somniferum*) – is a calming adaptogen that also exhibits antispasmodic, immune amphoteric, anxiolytic and antinociceptive activity. In an animal study *Withania* strongly potentiated the analgesic effects of morphine and prevented rebound hyperalgesia (Orrú, et al, 2014). It is used with stronger-acting herbs for fibromyalgia pain or back pain. As an immune amphoteric it can also help inhibit autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Dose: Tea: 1/2 tsp. dried, powdered root, 8 oz. water, decoct 10 minutes, steep 30 minutes, take 4 oz. 3x/day
Tincture (1:5): 2-3 mL TID

Betony herb (*Stachys officinalis*) – is a nervine and antinociceptive especially indicated for head pain. It has a very long history of use for stress headaches, post-concussion headaches (with St. John's wort), migraines and neuralgic pains in the head or scalp.

Dose: Tea: 1-2 tsp. dried herb, 8 oz. hot water, steep, covered, 15-20 minutes. Take 2-3 cups per day
Tincture (1:4 or 1:5): 3-5 mL (60-100 gtt.) TID

Cannabis (*Cannabis sativa*) – has long been used for its ability to relieve pain and alter consciousness. With the advent of “medical marijuana”, new strains of the drug have been developed. Some strains have very low levels of THC (the constituent that causes intoxication) and high levels of CBD (cannabidiol). Cannabidiol has been shown to have powerful antinociceptive, anticonvulsant and antiinflammatory activity. Research into the potential uses of this non-mind altering form of Cannabis have shown it can help prevent seizures, relieve chronic muscle pain and spasms caused by MS, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and ALS as well as pain due to RSD, migraines and cluster headaches.

Dose: as needed.

Cyperus/Xiang Fu (*Cyperus rotundus*) – see analgesics.

Indian Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) – this unusual plant is partially parasitic on tree roots and it contains no chlorophyll. The entire plant (root and stem) are made into a tincture that is perhaps our most powerful antinociceptive. You still know it hurts, you just don't care! The pain is at a distance, and more tolerable. Combined with Corydalis (equal parts) and Bai Zhi (1/2 part), I have used this repeatedly to treat late stage cancer pain. It potentiates morphine, allowing people to reduce their dosage, enhance pain relief and maintain a clear mind in their last stage of life.

Dose: Tea: 2 tsp. dried root, 10 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, steep for 1 hour, take 4 oz. 2x/day
Tincture (1:2): 1-1.5 mL TID/QID

Kava rhizome (*Piper methysticum*) – is a relaxing herb that relieves anxiety, improves mood and inhibits spasms and pain. It can be used to treat fibromyalgia, torticollis, urinary tract pain, back pain and tight, sore muscles.

Dose: Tea: 1-2 tsp. dried, powdered root, 8 oz. water, decoct 15 minutes, homogenize it in a blender, and steep 1 hour. To enhance absorption and flavor, mix it with coconut milk and pineapple juice. Take 4 oz. 4x/day
Tincture (1:4 or 1:5): 2-4 mL TID/QID
Tablet (standardized extract): 100-200 mg TID

Mimosa bark/He Huan Pi (*Albizia julibrissin*) – is primarily used as a mood elevator, and can be used for people whose psychic pain (grief, depression, broken heart) intensifies their physical pain. It is also used in TCM orally and topically for low back pain, bruises, fractures and other trauma injuries.

Dose: Tea: 1-2 tsp. dried bark, 8 oz. water, decoct 10-15 minutes, steep 30 minutes take 4 oz. 4x/day

Tincture (1:5): 2-4 mL (40-80 gtt.) TID

Prickly Ash bark (*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*) – was used by the Eclectic physicians for peripheral nerve pain with impaired circulation such as peripheral neuropathies, carpal tunnel syndrome or Raynaud's phenomenon. It is often used with St. John's wort.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried bark, 10 oz. water, decoct 10 minutes, steep 40 minutes, take 4 oz. 3x/day

Tincture (1:5): .5-2 mL TID/QID

HERBAL ANTISPASMODICS

Butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) – is also known as western Coltsfoot. The PA-free extract of this herb is a powerful antispasmodic which can be used for dysmenorrhea, leg cramps, torticollis or back spasms.

In clinical trials it helped to relieve the frequency and severity of migraines in children (Pothmann & Danesch, 2005) as well as adults (Lipton, et al, 2004).

Dose: Tablet [standardized PA-free extract (8 mg. petasin)]: 1 tablet BID

Kava root (*Piper methysticum*) – see antinociceptives.

Khella seed (*Ammi visnaga*) – is an effective antispasmodic used for respiratory (asthma), gallbladder, cardiac (angina) and intestinal spasms. It can help relieve the pain associated with passing kidney stones (with Lobelia, Kava, Hydrangea, Yucca or Jamaica Dogwood) or gallstones (use it with Celandine, Fringe Tree and Wild Yam).

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried seeds, 8 oz. hot water, steep covered 45 minutes, take 4 oz. TID

Tincture (1:5): .5-1 mL TID/QID

Kudzu root (*Pueraria spp.*) – is an antispasmodic and antiinflammatory used for neck spasms and pain, IBS, migraines, stiff, achy muscles, cluster headaches and back pain. It can also be used with Kava, Khella, Corydalis or Scullcap for bladder, intestinal, vaginal or rectal spasms (and pain).

Dose: Tea: 1-2 tsp. dried root, 12 oz. water, decoct 15-20 minutes, steep 1 hour, take 2-3 cups/day

Tincture (1:5): 3-5 mL TID/QID

Siler root/Fang Feng (*Saposhnikovia divaricata*) – is used in TCM as an antispasmodic and analgesic. It can be used with St. John's wort, Sweet Melilot, Prickly Ash or Jamaica Dogwood for facial nerve pain, optic neuralgia or sciatica. It is also used to treat cold/damp arthralgias (use it with Bai Zhi, Ginger, Boswellia or Turmeric).

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried root, 8 oz. water, decoct 10 minutes, steep covered 30 minutes, take 4 oz. 3x/day

Tincture (1:5): 1.5-2 mL QID

Wild Yam rhizome (*Dioscorea villosa*) – is specific for intestinal or bilious colic (with Cyperus, Catnip or Kudzu), gallbladder spasms (use it with Celandine, Cyperus and Fringe Tree) and pain due to IBS or IBD.

Dose: Tea: 1-2 tsp. dried c/s root, 12 oz. water, decoct 15-20 minutes, steep for 1 hour, take 2-3 cups/day

Tincture (1:5 or 1:2): 1.5-2 mL TID/QID

Zizyphus seed/Suan Zao Ren (*Zizyphus spinosa*) – is used in TCM to nourish the heart and calm the shen. It is an antispasmodic, analgesic and sedative. It is most effective for spasmodic pain that interferes with sleep. It can be used with Scullcap, Blue Vervain, Kudzu or Gastrodia for restless leg syndrome, bruxism and back or neck spasms.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried seed, 8 oz. water, decoct 10 minutes, steep 45 minutes, take 4 oz. 4x/day

Tincture (1:5): 1-2 mL TID

Other herbal antispasmodics include Black Haw, Cramp Bark, Skunk Cabbage, Roman Chamomile, Scullcap, Silk Tassel and Blue Vervain.

ANTIINFLAMMATORIES

Achyranthes root/Huai Niu Xi (*Achyranthes bidentata*) – is used in Chinese medicine as a kidney yang tonic. Many of these herbs (which also include Drynaria, Teasel, Eucommia and Morinda root) are used for musculoskeletal pain, especially low back pain, knee or ankle pain or sciatica. Achyranthes is also a mild analgesic and antinociceptive and is of benefit for bursitis, tendonitis, whiplash and painful ligaments or tendons.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried root, 8 oz. water, decoct 5 minutes, steep 40 minutes, take 4 oz. 3x/day
Tincture (1:5): 1.5-2 mL QID

Boswellia gum resin (*Boswellia serrata*) – This relative of Frankincense moves blood and removes stagnation. It has been shown in human clinical trials to relieve pain due to osteo- and rheumatoid arthritis (Vishal, et al, 2011; Gupta & Samarakoon, 2011; Sontakke, et al, 2007). In other studies it also reduced pain caused by IBS and IBD (Madisch, et al, 2007; Gupta, et al, 2001) and cluster headaches (Lampl, et al, 2012).

Dose: Tea: 1/2-1 tsp. powdered dried resin, 12 oz. water, decoct 15-20 minutes, steep covered 45 minutes, take 4 oz. 3x/day
Tincture (1:5): 1.5-2.5 mL TID
Capsules-Standardized to 25-37% Boswellic acids: 300-400 mg TID

Drynaria root/Gu Sui Bu (*Drynaria fortunei*) – is another TCM kidney yang tonic used to treat low back pain as well as sciatica and knee or ankle pain. It can also be effective for facial nerve pain (with Mullein root, St. John's wort, Jamaica Dogwood or Sweet Melilot). Drynaria can be used topically in a dit da jow for bone bruises and pain due to fractures.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried root, 8 oz. water, steep covered 30 minutes, take 4 oz. 3x/day
Tincture (1:5): 1.5-2 mL TID

Gotu Kola herb (*Centella asiatica*) – is indicated for tissue that is red, hot and inflamed. It is often combined with Sarsaparilla and can be effective as part of a protocol for rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, IBD, post-concussion pain, gastritis, vulvodynia (topically and orally) or interstitial cystitis. Centella can also be useful for pain due to vascular insufficiency (PAD, varicose veins) and topically for painful inflammation of the skin.

Dose: Tea: 1-2 tsp. dried herb, 8 oz. hot water, steep covered 45 minutes, take 4 oz. 3x/day
Tincture (1:2): 1.5-2 mL TID

Guaiac wood (*Guaiacum officinale*) – is a powerful antiinflammatory used for hot/damp arthritis. It should always be combined with other herbs such as Sarsaparilla for Lyme arthralgia or Gotu Kola for rheumatoid arthritis. Guaiac used as a simple or in high dose can cause gastric irritation.

Dose: Tincture (1:5): .25-.5 mL TID

Sarsaparilla (*Smilax spp.*) – like Gotu Kola, is used for tissue or organs that are red, hot and inflamed. It binds endotoxins in the gut, reducing the inflammatory load. I often combine it with Gotu Kola for hot/damp conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis. I also use it with Teasel, Japanese Knotweed or Ligusticum root for Lyme-induced arthritis.

Dose: Tea: 2 tsp. dried root, 12 oz. water, decoct 15-20 minutes, steep for 1 hour, take 3 cups/day
Tincture (1:5): 3-5 mL TID/QID

Teasel root/Xu Duan (*Dipsacus asper*) – is used in TCM to treat low back pain and weak or painful knees or ankles. It is also of benefit for relieving pain and inflammation due to Lyme arthralgia, post-Lyme arthralgia and wind/damp arthritis. Xu Duan is effective for cold, stiff, achy joints, painful tendons or ligaments and sciatica.

Dose: Tea: 1 tsp. dried, powdered root, 8 oz. water, decoct 10-15 minutes, steep 40 minutes, take 4 oz. 4x/day
Tincture (1:5): 1-2 mL TID

Turmeric rhizome (*Curcuma longa*) – is a powerful antiinflammatory and antinociceptive agent. It is most effective for treating pain due to cold/damp arthralgias, fibromyalgia, sciatica and brachial nerve pain. I prefer Turmeric tincture or the powdered herb in capsules to the standardized Curcumin.

It can also be useful for hepatic pain due to hepatitis and intestinal or gastric pain caused by diverticulitis, gastritis, gastric ulcers, IBD or IBS.

Dose: Tea (Infusion): 1/2 tsp. dried, freshly powdered rhizome, 8 oz. hot water, steep covered for 45 minutes, take 4 oz. 4x/day

Tincture (1:2 or 1:4): 2-4 mL (40-80 gtt.) TID/QID

Capsules - Standardized 80-90% Curcumin: 250 mg - 500 mg TID (Curcumin products should also contain whole Turmeric, Piperine or PC to enhance absorption)

Other herbal/nutritional antiinflammatories include Pycnogenol[®], Grape seed extract, Bromelain, Quercetin, SAmE, Ginger and Alpha Lipoic acid.

TOPICAL APPLICATIONS

Trauma oil – is a combination of infused oils of Arnica, Hypericum and Lobelia seed with essential oil of Sweet Birch. This formula is highly effective as a local treatment for pain and inflammation due to sprains, contusions, whiplash, mild muscle or tendon tears, and cold/damp arthritis (use with heat).

Capsaicin – is effective for treating mild to moderate pain caused by arthritis, neuropathy, post-herpetic neuralgia, joint pain, backaches and sprains.

Essential Oils (EOs) - topical applications of many EOs (Lavender, Helichrysum, Tea Tree, Black Pepper, Eucalyptus, Ginger, etc.) can be used to offer temporary relief of pain due to trauma, arthritis, headaches, and burns.

Witch Hazel – is still popular as a liniment due to its ability to relieve inflammation and pain caused by hemorrhoids, varicose veins, bruises and muscle strains.

Dit Da Jows – Chinese martial arts liniments have many ingredients, but common ones include blood moving herbs such as Safflower/Hong Hua, Dan Shen/Salvia miltiorrhiza, Myrrh, Frankincense, Dang Gui and Processed Aconite. Western herbs such as Horse Chestnut, Wintergreen, Sage, Prickly Ash or Wild Ginger can also be used to make a dit da jow. These liniments can be used to prevent injuries (intense physical exercise, training for athletic competitions) and to promote healing of muscle strains, bruises, minor muscle tears and bursitis.

HERBAL REPERTORY FOR PAIN

Gastrointestinal pain	Wild Yam, Kudzu, Chamomile, Cyperus, Ginger, Turmeric, Catnip, Pleurisy root, Meadowsweet, Gotu Kola, Hops, Valerian, Jamaica Dogwood, California Poppy, Boswellia, Asafoetida, Corydalis
Genitourinary pain Kidney/Bladder Pain due to a kidney stone Testicular	Hydrangea, Kava, Gravel root, Khella, Wintergreen, Black Cohosh, Agrimony, Gotu Kola, Eryngo, Achyranthes, Sweet Birch, Willow, Arnica, Meadowsweet, Spilanthes Khella, Lobelia, Hydrangea, Hops, Yucca, Kava Kava, Pulsatilla, Black Cohosh, Hydrangea, Cleavers, Cyperus
Neurologic or nerve pain Brachial nerve pain Facial nerve/TMJ pain Neuralgic pain Peripheral nerve pain	St. John's wort, Sweet Melilot, Turmeric, Ligusticum root, Jamaica Dogwood, Notopterygium, Prickly Ash, Siler Mullein root, Jamaica Dogwood, Gambir, St. John's wort, Siler, Drynaria, Gelsemium, Blue Vervain, Du Huo, Skunk Cabbage St. John's wort, Prickly Ash, Mistletoe Prickly Ash, St. John's wort, Gui Zhi (Cinnamon twig)

Sciatica	Bai Zhi, Sweet Melilot, Teasel, Chinese Clematis, Dogbane, Ligusticum root, Siler, Achyranthes, Drynaria, Turmeric, Gum Guggul, Horse Chestnut, Jamaica Dogwood, Bai Zhu, Corydalis
Optic neuralgia	Sweet Melilot, Pulsatilla, Jamaica Dogwood, Gastrodia
Headaches	
Migraines	
Excess/heat (liver fire rising)	Feverfew, Tian Ma, Gambir, Kudzu, Gelsemium, Betony, Jamaica Dogwood, Cannabis (high CBD strains), Mistletoe, St. John's wort, Cassia seed/Jue Ming Zi, Celandine, Wild Lettuce, Blue Vervain, White Peony, Tree Peony, Baikal Scullcap/Huang Qin, Virgin's Bower (Clematis)
Deficient/cold	Bacopa, Lavender, Periwinkle, White Peony, Tian Ma, Ligusticum root, Ginger, Rosemary, standardized Ginkgo, Siler, Night-Blooming Cereus, Bai Zhi, Blue Flag, Du Huo, Periwinkle
Cluster headaches	Kudzu, Boswellia, Cannabis (high CBD strains)
Sinus headaches	Bai Zhi, Kudzu, Butterbur (PA-free only), Du Huo, Notopterygium
Stress headaches	Betony, Passion Flower, Kava, Black Cohosh, Scullcap, California Poppy, Chinese Polygala, Lavender
Spasmodic headaches	Corydalis, Jamaica Dogwood, Siler, Kava, Scullcap, Butterbur (PA-free only), Bai Zhi, Tribulus, Sweet Melilot
Occipital headaches	Passion Flower, Kudzu, Notopterygium, Siler
Frontal headaches	Bai Zhi, with Baikal Scullcap
Vertex headaches	Gao Ben (Ligusticum sinense), Betony
Headaches due to head trauma or concussion	St. John's wort, Bacopa, Ligusticum root, White Peony, Gotu Kola, Betony
Menstrual headaches	Chaste Tree, Ligusticum root, White Peony, Betony, Tiger Lily, Pulsatilla
Temporal headaches	Bupleurum with Baikal Scullcap/Huang Qin
Wind/damp headaches	Ligusticum root, Du Huo, Siler, Notopterygium, Rosemary, Lavender
Wind/heat headaches	Sweet Melilot, Feverfew, St. John's wort, Kudzu, Chrysanthemum, Gambir
Wind/cold headaches	Ligusticum root, Siler, Passion Flower, Bai Zhu, Prickly Ash
Headaches with a sore or bruised feeling	Arnica
Pain due to impaired circulation/Blood stagnation	Ginger, Horse Chestnut, Prickly Ash, Ligusticum root, Gotu Kola, Corydalis, Boswellia, Epimedium, Turmeric, Myrrh, Frankincense, Safflower, Dang Gui
Gallbladder pain	Celandine, Khella, Wild Yam, Cordydlis, Cyperus, California Poppy, Silk Tassel
Hepatic pain	Fringe Tree, Cyperus, Turmeric, Wild Yam, Culver's Root, Dan Shen
Spleen pain	Bear's Foot, Figwort, Red Root, Baikal Scullcap, Milk Thistle
Cancer pain	Corydalis with Indian Pipe and Bai Zhi, Cannabis
Spasmodic or tensive pain	Kava, Khella, Kudzu, Magnolia bark, Petasites, Cannabis (high CBD strains), Zizyphus, California Poppy, Khella
Cardiac pain (angina)	Corydalis, Kudzu, Gambir, Cyperus, Dang Gui, Safflower, Frankincense, Myrrh
Respiratory pain "it hurts to breathe"	Pleurisy Root, California Poppy
Musculoskeletal pain	
Cold/damp arthritis	Ginger, Boswellia, Myrrh, Bai Zhi, Bai Zhu, Spikenard, Arnica, Ligusticum root, Siler, Turmeric, Gum Guggul, Horse Chestnut, Devil's Club, Cang Zhu, Fu Zi, Safflower, Epimedium, Pippali Long Pepper
Hot/damp arthritis	Guaiaac, Clematis, Sarsaparilla, Gotu Kola, Magnolia bark, Devil's Claw, Willow, Yucca, Mulberry bark

Wind/damp arthritis	Bai Zhi, Chinese Clematis, Teasel, Magnolia bark, Boswellia, Frankincense, Cinnamon, Ligusticum root, Japanese Knotweed, Cang Zhu, Fu Zi, Notopterygium, Coix, Gum Guggul
Wind/cold arthritis	Notopterygium
Bursitis	Gotu Kola, Achyranthes, Devil's Claw, Chinese Clematis, Boswellia
Lyme arthritis	Ligusticum root, Teasel, Japanese Knotweed, Sarsaparilla, Gou Teng
Deficient Kidney yang pain (low back, knees or ankles)	Teasel, Achyranthes, Drynaria, Morinda, Eucommia, Cistanche, Epimedium
Back pain	Black Cohosh, Kudzu, Mimosa, Achyranthes, Teasel, Willow, Yucca
Fibromyalgia	Black Cohosh, Kava, White Peony, Ashwagandha, Turmeric
Joint pain	Boswellia, Teasel, Blue Cohosh, Drynaria, Achyranthes, Coix, Solomon's Seal, Gui Zhi (Cinnamon twig)
Muscles sore from overuse	Wood Betony, trauma oil (topically), Kudzu, Kava
Muscles feel bruised	Arnica, trauma oil (topically)
Neck pain	Kudzu, Achyranthes, trauma oil (topically), Butterbur (PA-free only), Kava, Chinese Clematis, Jamaica Dogwood
Dull, deep-seated muscular pain	Black Cohosh, Horse Chestnut
SI joint pain	Teasel, Chinese Clematis, Dogbane, Horse Chestnut (for pain that is worse when bending over), Achyranthes, Drynaria
Tendonitis	Mulberry bark, Achyranthes, Drynaria, Teasel
Bones or muscles hurt due to fever	Boneset, Blue Vervain, Tree Peony, Lycium root, Black Cohosh, Dogwood bark
Torticollis or Whiplash	Kudzu, Chinese Clematis, St. John's wort, Corydalis, White Peony, Achyranthes, Notopterygium, Skunk Cabbage, Butterbur (PA-free only)
Intercostal pain	Pleurisy root, Black Haw, Cyperus, Wild Cherry bark, Black Cohosh
Uterine or menstrual pain	Black Cohosh, Cyperus, Jamaica Dogwood, Butterbur (PA-free only), Black Haw, White Peony, Tree Peony, Corydalis, Roman Chamomile, Cramp Bark, Gelsemium, Ligusticum root, Cotton Root
Ovarian pain	Blue Cohosh, Gelsemium, Tiger Lily (burning pain), Sweet Melilot, Horse Chestnut, Jamaica Dogwood, Butterbur (PA-free only)
Dull, throbbing pain	Horse Chestnut, Notopterygium, Wintergreen (urinary tract)
Sharp, stabbing pain	Sweet Melilot, St. John's wort
Pain with edema	Dogbane, Gum Guggul, Bai Zhi, Horse Chestnut, Siler
Tearing pain	Mistletoe
Burning pain	St. John's wort, Prickly Ash
Painful sore throat	As a gargle – Spilanthes, Kava, Echinacea angustifolia, Skunk Cabbage, Sage, Peppermint EO (diluted), Tea Tree EO (diluted), Burdock seed
Toothache	Spilanthes, Clove EO, Kava solid extract, Plantain tincture, Wintergreen EO (diluted), Bai Zhi, Jamaica Dogwood, Osha
Itching	Menthol (topically), Tribulus, Schizonepeta, Siler, Sophora
Insomnia due to pain	Jamaica Dogwood, Hops, Corydalis, Zizyphus
Hernia pain	Spicebush, Cyperus, Fenugreek, Wild Yam, Corydalis

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