

ABOUT CHINESE HERBAL FORMULAS

As owner of the Acupuncture Continuum in Encinitas, Ms. Sulger maintains one of the largest Chinese herbal pharmacies in San Diego County. She prescribes and custom-blends a variety of Chinese herbs specifically tailored to each client's needs.

Chinese Herbs: An important part of Oriental medicine is Chinese herbal formulas. The Chinese have been using herbs for over 3,000 years. During this time they have developed classical herbal formulas which are effective for many different health concerns.

What is a Chinese herbal formula? An herbal formula is made up of several different herbs -- each herb is chosen for its own specific functions. In addition, combinations of certain herbs also perform specific functions together as a team.

What is the difference between Chinese herbs and western herbs? Western herbal medicine tends to use one or two herbs to treat just a specific symptom. A Chinese herbal formula usually has several ingredients in it, as little as 4 up to as many as 18 different herbs. 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 the branch (or the symptom) of a health concern. It is in this way that we are able to treat a person's whole body, rather than just a symptom

How long will I need to take herbs? Generally, when a patient is taking an herbal formula, we like to see that patient at least once a week. It is in this way that we can assess the patient's progress with their herbs, and make any changes which may be needed. Pharmaceutical drugs have a very fast effect, whereas Chinese herbs tend to have a slower effect. It may take two weeks to two months, depending on the health concern, to achieve results. Also, because each person is different, we may need to put a patient on two or three different herbal formulas before finding the perfect combination for that person's constitution. The key is to have patience with your body as it balances itself slowly but thoroughly with herbs.

Do herbs have side effects? Most of the time, when prescribed by a licensed acupuncturist, side effects are minimal. Herbal medicine uses all the constituents of an herb, including the cellulose. The herb is completely balanced, and therefore has few side effects. With pharmaceutical medications, the active ingredient is taken out of a plant (or synthesized in the laboratory) and there is no cellulose or other constituents remaining -- this is why there are so many side effects to western medications -- there is nothing to balance the active ingredient.

A person with a strong constitution is able to digest and tolerate most herbs. However, if a person has weak digestion, they may experience some minor digestive disturbances. At this point, we would usually add some herbs to strengthen that patient's digestion. If you have noticed any side effects, please stop taking your herbs and consult your acupuncturist right away.