

Distinguishing Between The Liver Harmonising Formulas

THE FORMULAS

The following Sun Herbal formulas are all used to harmonise the Liver and promote the Liver's 'smoothing' action on the Qi flow throughout the body. However, there are distinct differences in the clinical applications of each one:

Ban Xia Hou Po Tang (Jia Wei)
(Pinellia & Magnolia Combination
BP067)



Chai Hu Shu Gan Wan
(Bupleurum & Cyperus
Combination BP006)



Dang Gui Shao Yao San
(Dang Gui & Peony Formula
BP087)



Jia Wei Xiao Yao San
(Bupleurum & Peony Formula
BP013)



Shao Yao Gan Cao Tang
(Peony & Licorice
Combination BP090)



Shu Gan Wan
(Cyperus & Peony Formula
BP022)



Tong Xie Yao Fang (Jia Wei)
(Peony & Atractylodes
Combination BP062)



Xiao Yao San
(Bupleurum & Dang-gui
Formula BP031)



THE LIVER

The main functions of the Liver include:

- Stores the Blood and regulates the volume of circulating Blood
- Maintains the normal smooth flow of the Qi
- Governs the tendons and ligaments and manifests in the nails
- Stores the ethereal soul (*hun*), allowing a sense of humaneness, kindness and benevolence.

As the Liver plays an important role in storing the Blood, pathologies that affect the Blood may impact on the Liver, e.g. loss of blood and chronic disease, which consume the Yin and the Blood. The signs and symptoms of Liver disorders are related to this organ's primary functions: storing the Blood, maintaining the normal smooth and even flow of the Qi (specifically relating to the emotional state, digestion and the secretion of bile), 'governing' the tendons and ligaments and manifesting in the nails. In addition the eyes are its signaling sense organ and it stores the ethereal soul (*hun*). Thus, the common distinguishing signs in Liver disorders include:

- Emotional and psychological manifestations such as irritability, anger, sense of frustration, emotional volatility, depressed mood, loss of self-esteem, restlessness and vivid disturbing dreams.
- Sense of discomfort and distension in the hypochondrium.
- Menstrual disorders and disorders that are related to the menstrual cycle.

It should be noted that many of the signs and symptoms in Liver syndromes relate to the passage of the Liver and Gallbladder Channels, specifically in the areas of the hypochondrium, chest and breasts, the external genitals, the nasopharynx, the eyes, the ears

as well as the temporal region and vertex of the head. Thus the following may be seen in Liver or Liver and Gallbladder disorders:

- Sense tightness or oppressive sensation in the chest, the need to make an effort to take a deep breath, sighing
- Sensation of distension and pain in the hypochondrium
- Itching or inflammation of the external genitals
- Sinusitis, inflammatory disorders of the anterior nares
- Disorders of the eyes and vision (e.g. inflammation of the conjunctiva, loss of visual acuity)
- Middle ear infections, inflammatory disorders of the external auditory canal
- Headaches – temporal or vertical

When considering the various manifestations of Liver disorders it is helpful to remember that the Liver belongs to the Wood phase. It is the young or immature Yang. In contrast to the Earth phase of the Spleen & Stomach, it requires the counterbalancing action of all of the other Zang organs: promoted by the Kidney (Water); controlled by the Lung (Metal); and nourished with Blood by the Spleen and Heart. In addition, because of the specific nature of the Liver's Qi regulating functions, it has a restricting as well as a promoting relationship with each of the other Zang-fu organs. Thus, it is easy to see that Liver disorders rarely occur in isolation.

The various Liver functions may be divided into Yin and Yang: broadly speaking, those that relate to the Qi are Yang and those that relate to the Blood and Body Fluids are Yin. Thus the Liver's control over the smooth and even flow of the Qi is the main Yang

function; and, in addition, there is the warming, driving and toning action of the Qi, as it relates to the Liver Channel. The Liver Yin consists of storing the Blood, as well as receiving and storing the Essence that it receives both from the Kidney as well as the Spleen.

The Liver's function of maintaining the normal smooth flow of the Qi (*Yang*) depends on it having an adequate supply of Blood and Essence (*Yin*) in order to counterbalance and 'temper' the dynamic nature of the Qi, i.e. to prevent it from becoming harsh, overly tense, overly active and unrestrained. When this harmonious balance is lost, the disorder of Liver constraint (also referred to as Liver Qi stagnation or Liver Qi constraint) arises. Looked at in this way, Liver constraint may manifest as an excess of Qi or a deficiency of Blood, or a combination of the two.

Liver constraint has a tendency to develop various additional pathologies and should therefore be regarded as a group of disorders, rather than a single isolated syndrome. Because of the dynamic balance between the Liver Qi and the Liver Blood, a disorder of the one tends to cause a disorder of the other. Thus, there will always be some degree of Blood deficiency. It should also be remembered that an excess of Qi readily develops into Fire, which further depletes the Blood, as well as the Qi. In addition, Qi stagnation leads to Blood stasis, particularly when there is

concomitant Blood deficiency. Furthermore, when the Liver Qi is excessive – and thus overly active – it tends to invade the Spleen and/or Stomach to cause various disorders of the middle Jiao. Finally, as the fluid pathways depend on the Liver Qi, Phlegm may readily arise, due to impaired metabolism and distribution of the fluids.

Each one of the major classical formulas dealing with Liver constraint targets a particular aspect of this group of disorders. Therefore, considerable care should be taken in the clinic to determine what particular manifestation of Liver constraint a patient is exhibiting. Thus, most of the core signs and symptoms of Liver constraint will be present, along with specific distinguishing features.

Key Diagnostic Features of Liver Constraint:

- Emotional 'strain', e.g. depressed mood, irritability, feeling 'stressed out' or 'wound up'.
- Discomfort with a sense of tightness in the hypochondrium and/or chest, often with a sense of difficulty in taking a deep breath
- Menstruation disorders, e.g. PMT, breast distension, bloating, irregular cycle
- Aggravation of symptoms by emotional strain
- Wiry pulse

THE LIVER HARMONISING FORMULAS

Xiao Yao San (Bupleurum & Dang-gui Formula BP031)

- Liver constraint, deficiency syndrome (Liver Blood deficiency, Spleen Qi deficiency)
- Stress related disorders, mood disorders
- Gynecological disorders (menstrual, breasts)
- Fatigue, feeling overwhelmed
- Poor appetite
- Weak and wiry pulse

Jia Wei Xiao Yao San (Bupleurum & Peony Formula BP013)

- Liver constraint, deficiency syndrome with stagnant Heat (or Fire)
- Similar to Xiao Yao San above
- Signs of Heat or Fire: irritability, headache, dry mouth, sleep disturbance, red eyes, sensations of heat, dysuria, rapid pulse

Chai Hu Shu Gan Wan

(Bupleurum & Cyperus Combination BP006)

- Liver constraint with Qi stagnation leading to Blood stasis.
- Physical discomfort or pain
- Gynecological disorders
- Psychological disorders
- Disorders of the liver, gallbladder, stomach, and various types of neuralgia
- Wiry pulse (not weak)

Dang Gui Shao Yao San (Dang Gui & Peony Formula BP087)

- Liver-Spleen disharmony due to Liver Blood deficiency and Spleen Qi deficiency
- Gynecological disorders mainly
- Cramping mild to moderate abdominal pain
- Qi stagnation, Blood stasis and retained Damp

Shu Gan Wan (Cyperus & Peony Formula BP022)

- Liver Qi invasion of the Stomach.
- GIT disorders: bloating and pain in the epigastrium, belching, acidic reflux, nausea or vomiting
- Symptoms worsened or brought on by stress
- Also for chronic liver diseases

Tong Xie Yao Fang (Jia Wei)

(Peony & Atractylodes Combination BP062)

- Liver Qi invasion of the Spleen
- Diarrhoea and spasmodic abdominal pain
- Symptoms are brought on or aggravated by emotional strain

Ban Xia Hou Po Tang (Jia Wei)

(Pinellia & Magnolia Combination BP067)

- Qi stagnation due to Qi-Phlegm complex
- Qi counterflow: reflux, chronic gastritis
- 'Plum-pit' Qi: laryngitis, pharyngitis, hysteria (with globus hystericus), oesophageal spasm
- Usually need to combine with another specific Liver harmonising formula to restore normal Qi flow, resolve Phlegm or harmonise the middle Jiao

Shao Yao Gan Cao Tang (Peony & Licorice Combination BP090)

- Liver Blood deficiency
- Muscular spasms or cramps (smooth or skeletal)



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