

Table of _____ Contents

Introduction

What Is Physical Pain?	3
Modern View of Pain Perception	4
Type of Pain	5
The Healing Herbs	8

Top 8 Herbs for Pain

Internal Applications:

Turmeric (Yu Jin)	9
Notoginseng (San Qi)	12
Kava (+ Cacao)	16
Angelica Root (Du Huo)	19
Corydalis (Yan Hu Suo)	22

Topical Applications:

Camphor	
CBD	28
Cayenne	

What Is Physical Pain?

From the indigenous Chinese perspective, all physical pain comes from stagnation. Any obstruction along a meridian, or in a muscle group, tendon, joint articulation, internal organ ... wherever ... creates pain.

So, to relieve pain we must clear the obstruction, remove the stagnation, and get energ flowing again smoothly. Sounds simple? It is. Though simple does not imply easy!

How do we get stagnations in the first place?

There are a lot of ways we stagnate energy in our lives. It could be from a traumatic injury. Say you broke a bone, or cut your skin. The act of scar formation is creating a stagnation in that local area.

Any and every surgery forms a stagnation. That is why it is extremely important to move the energy after any medical operation.

A special note - we need to be able to create stagnations. The clotting factors that reside in our blood are significant to our survival. If every time we got a cut and kept bleeding, that would not be good for us. A scab forms to keep our blood and other good things in us, while keeping pathogens and other bad things out of us.

Clotting is good for us in acute situations to survive. Scars and continued obstructing of blood and energy are not good for us chronically if we are to thrive.

Poor eating, stress and emotional taxations, and other lifestyle factors also create accumulations in the body. Seek balance in your daily activities.

To the ancient priest-physicians of China, emotions were as much a form of pathogenesis (disease creation) as a viral infection. Emotions can create disease (disease) in the body - they can also forge incredible health.

Modern View of _____ Pain Perception

Physical pain is from damage, or perceived damage, to our tissues. The fancy scientific word is nociception. This is the sensory processing system of our body that tells the brain, "We have a problem. Systems check initiated."

Now, there is a tricky thing to pain. Perception is everything. For instance, our nociceptors (the wiring from body to brain) may be stimulated in the absence of awareness of pain. And we may feel pain, even when the painful stimuli has not activated our nociceptors.

Here is an example. A person suffers massive trauma, from a car accident, combat in war, etc. They clearly are damaged physically, yet they may have a seemingly painless response. Or another patient presents with a functional painful syndrome yet there is no distinguishable tissue damage. On one end, a person severely injured may express they are feeling no pain. On the other end, a person may report excruciating pain and doctors cannot find any physical reason for the pain felt.

There is a lot to this in what researchers refer to as the "inflammatory soup." It is a whole mixture of peptides, hormones, neurotransmitters, prostaglandins, neurotrophins, and more. The specifics are not necessary here, but knowing that pain is a biopsychosocial phenomenon is significant.

"Pain Processing in the Human Nervous System: A Selective Review of Nociceptive and Biobehavioral Pathways"

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3438523/

Type of Pain

The two main categories of pain are





The International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) qualifies pain lasting for more than six months as chronic. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), pain for three months or more is chronic. Either way, who desires to be in pain for any amount of months?

We have categories of muscle pain, nerve pain, joint pain, and inflammatory pain. Pain can be somatic (from injury to the body), visceral (from disturbance to tissues and organs in the abdominal cavity, leading to referred pain where the site of pain is not the source), and neuropathic (from injury to nerve tissue).

We can further separate pain by location. For example, there is acute abdominal pain or chronic head pain. Whatever you call it, it's a pain in the ... everywhere and anywhere!

Chronic Pain Is a Global Health Crisis

Firstly, people are in pain, everywhere around the world. In the United States alone, there

are four times the number of chronic pain sufferers than there are diabetics. According to the NIH, "pain affects more Americans than diabetes, heart disease and cancer combined." Based on the figures of some researchers, the global prevalence of pain is **20–50%**. That means one-in-five, or potentially, every other person you see is suffering from chronic pain.

> https://www.hindawi.com/jou rnals/prm/2017/4643830/

https://academic.oup.com/bja/ article/111/13/330341

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Pain is also big business for big health. According to the American Academy of Pain Medicine, in 2010 healthcare costs associated with pain management ranged from \$560-635 billion.

So, what are the most common types of pain?

Leading the pack is low back pain, with headache or migraine pain next, then neck pain and then facial pain. That's according to a survey from 2006.



All studies show that low back pain is far and beyond the single most prolific form of chronic pain. It is the main reason folks miss the majority of work, and 80% of the population will experience a back problem at some point in their lives.

Low back pain is the number one leading cause of disability worldwide.

A Word on Fibromyalgia



Here is how the NIH puts it, "Fibromyalgia is a medical diagnosis used to describe the diminished quality of life related to generalized body pains and physical and psychological symptoms that occurs in the absence of a clear pathologic cause."

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/article s/PMC4575027/

Fibromyalgia has become a blanket diagnosis for pain and fatigue that cannot be readily explained. It is a chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome that is not fully understood.

We know that pain is both physical and psychological. We know that one can experience pain without any known physical source. In the conventional medical model, without a diagnosis, you cannot be prescribed pharmaceuticals. So, to give you drugs, you need to be told you have something.

If you go to a western doc and say that you are in chronic pain and you need help, they may, or may not, run a series of tests on you. If they ask you a bunch of questions, or put you through some lab work and MRIs, and find inconclusive results, they may call it something like fibromyalgia, simply to give you drugs.

Maybe you, or someone you know and love, is taking meds or was previously prescribed meds. Since you found your way here, you know there is better way. A way to heal, a way to recover, a way to be free!



The Healing Herbs

Herbs: Internal Applications

- 1. Turmeric (Yu Jin)
- 2. Notoginseng (San Qi)
- **3.** Kava (+ Cacao)
- 4. Du Huo
- 5. Yan Hu Suo

Herbs: Topical Applications (3 C's for Pain Relief)

Camphor
 CBD
 Cayenne

We can apply herbs in a few different ways to treat pain. Topically, you can put herbs on the area that hurts and allow the botanicals to absorb into your body and relieve the pain. Internally, you can ingest herbal substances to restore balance from within or you can do both.

Keep reading for the 5 herbs to use externally and the 3 herbs to use internally to be pain-free.





TURMERIC



Hurb

Turmeric

Latin Name

Curcuma longa

Other Name(s)

Yu Jin (TCM - Curcuma tuber), Jiang Huang (TCM -Curcuma rhizome), Haldi (Ayurveda), Indian saffron

Quick Description

The world-famous anti-inflammatory root with a brilliant color was used for centuries as a culinary and medicinal spice in Asia. Many people have this in their kitchen, making this a wonderful botanical healer available year round. Make it really (bio) available by combining with black pepper and a fat.

Ancient Wisdom

Cools the blood, breaks up stasis, promotes the movement of Qi, relieves stagnation, invigorates blood, opens channels, and reduces swelling.

Modern Understanding & Uses

Curcuminoids, such as curcumin (approximately 5% of turmeric), are the mainly researched chemical components of this plant. Known for their antiinflammatory properties, research shows that curcumin is an effective analgesic on par with NSAIDs. Studies show that in osteoarthritis, they begin acting in as few as 4-6 weeks.⁽³⁾

Many researchers have spoken to the need for quality studies that utilize better tactics to increase bioavailability and absorption. Still, they state that curcuminoids are an effective alternative to NSAIDs, which have a high toxicity.⁽⁴⁾

Traditional Application

Treats pain related to traumatic injury (used topically and internally), menstrual pain, pain of the chest, shoulders, flank, epigastrium, and abdomen.^(1, 5) Treats jaundice, gallstones, hemorrhage, bruises, arthritis, sprains, wounds, and toothache.⁽²⁾

Dosing Recommendations

Traditional: 6-12g

*The ancients had it right, they used turmeric in conjunction with black pepper and a fatty liquid medium. Studies show that turmeric, and curcumin, have a low bioavailabilty unless

Special Notes

Contraindicated during pregnancy, and use caution if taking anti-coagulants.

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Hurb

Notoginseng

Latin Name

Panax notoginseng, Panax pseudoginseng

Other Name(s)

San Qi or Tian Qi (TCM), pseudoginseng root, ginseng three seven

Quick Description

The "miracle root for the preservation of life," this relative of ginseng is known for its dual effects on the blood and cardiovascular system. Used to treat traumatic injury, this herb was once said to

be more precious than gold. It is the main ingredient in Yunnan Baiyao, an herbal formula used in warfare to stop traumatic blood loss from extreme wounds. For civilians, it makes a wonderful pain-relieving and cardioprotective herb.

Ancient Wisdom

Stops bleeding while not causing blood stasis, transforms blood stasis, reduces swelling, and stops pain.^(1,2)

Modern Understanding & Uses

Notoginseng is noted for its dual roles on the blood system. On one end, it has anti-platelet and anticoagulant properties that researchers are finding useful as an alternative to aspirin for cardiotonic effects.⁽³⁾ While traditionally it is used as a "stop bleeding" herb, initiating acute onset of coagulation.

Researchers discovered that San Qi protects myocardial cells (heart muscle) from apoptosis (cell death) during ischemic events (lack of oxygen).⁽³⁾ Meaning when the cells of the heart wall are starved of oxygen, notoginseng prevents them from dying.

Studies show that Tian Qi has cardioprotective qualities, specifically anti-thrombotic (anti-blood clots), anti-inflammatory, anti-atherosclerotic, vasodilative, anti-coagulant, anti-arrhythmic, and angiogenesis effects. All summed up, this herb removes

obstructions along blood vessels and maintains the smooth flow of blood systemically.⁽³⁾

The preparation of the herb is extremely crucial. Studies show that San Qi has both pro-hemostatic and anti-hemostatic properties. The raw version is a marvelous pro-hemostatic agent, meaning it prevents hemorrhage (loss of blood). The steamed version is quite anti-hemostatic, meaning it helps to move blood and prevent it from stagnating or clotting. The more it is steamed, the greater the anti-hemostatic qualities.⁽⁴⁾

Traditional Application

Treats internal and external bleeding including vomiting blood, nosebleed, blood in urine or stool, fractures, sores, and abscesses. ^{1,2)}

Dosing Recommendations

Traditional: 3-9g in decoctions

Special Notes

Caution during pregnancy

This herb is like a rock, if you get the whole dried root, soak it before pulverizing, and only use an industrial herb grinder to make a powder.

Extremely good for heart health by directly improving coronary blood flow (use the steamed form.) $^{(2)}$

Both forms (raw or steamed) are important for pain relief. The raw form helps to stop blood loss from the body, especially in traumatic conditions, while eliciting a mild analgesic effect. The steamed version makes for a great cardiotonic, keeping the vessels clear for smooth blood flow with no blockages.⁽⁴⁾

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Hurb

Kava

Latin Name

Piper methysticum

Other Name(s)

Intoxicating pepper, kava kava

Quick Description

An aboriginal treat now gracing the modern world in kava bars across the country. A non-alcoholic, yet psychoactive, libation made of this herb has been used ritually on South Pacific islands for centuries. Known for its sedative properties, this is also an excellent analgesic and muscle relaxant.

Ancient Wisdom

Used as a ceremonial intoxicant in South Pacific by priests and medicine workers among the aboriginal tribes.

Modern Understanding & Uses

Noted as an anxiolytic and sedative, used successfully for anxiety disorders and called a safe alternative to benzodiazepines.⁽¹⁾

Kavalactones, also referred to as pyrones, are the major known chemical compounds responsible for kava's effect on the central nervous system. These little molecules produce significant muscle relaxation without depressing cognitive functioning.⁽¹⁾

One of the kavalactones, kawain, is as potent as cocaine for topical anesthesia.⁽¹⁾

The GABA and MAOI effect of kava produce "feelings of physical relaxation with increased hedonic tone, with no deleterious effects on cognition." $^{(2)}$

Treats anxiety disorders, restlessness, insomnia, physical tension, and pain in the body.

Traditional Application

Treats pain, anxiety, stress, muscle spasms, dysmenorrhea, and insomnia.^(2,3)

Dosing Recommendations

Modern: Divide 150-300 mg of kava extract into two doses per day. About two hours after oral ingestion, kavalactones are at their peak in the bloodstream.⁽¹⁾ Traditional: Preparation of pulverized herb in a coldwater extract.

Special Notes

Kava + cacao produce noted actions for pain relief and psychospiritual effect, making for a wonderful, drinkable experience.

Avoid during pregnancy or if nursing.

Do not combine kava with alcohol as it increases the risk of liver damage. Overuse or overdose of kava does have hepatotoxic effects.

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Hurb

Angelica Root

Latin Name

Angelica pubescens

Other Name(s)

Du Huo (TCM), pubescent angelica root, doubleteeth angelica root, hairy angelica root

Quick Description

A go-to herb for pain in the lower body, mainly the lower back and legs. It is noted to be effective in both acute and chronic conditions. Excellent for the knees, and to free the body of pain by clearing wind-colddamp that is obstructing the free flow of energy.

Ancient Wisdom

Unblocks painful obstruction in the lower body, dispels wind-dampness, alleviates pain, and promotes Qi and blood flow. Especially useful for conditions of the lower back and legs, good for acute and chronic symptoms.^(1, 2)

Modern Understanding & Uses

Much research has been towards Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang, a Chinese herbal formula where Du Huo is the chief botanical. Studies show its efficacy in treating osteoarthritis, especially of the knees.⁽³⁾

Traditional Application

Treats acute and chronic painful conditions, pain in the lower back and legs, toothache, headache, aching heaviness of the lower back, and swollen gums.

Dosing Recommendations

Traditional: 3-9g

Special Notes

Use as a mouthwash for toothache $^{\left(2\right)}$

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Hurb

Corydalis

Latin Name

Corydalis yanhusuo

Other Name(s) Yan Hu Suo (TCM)

Quick Description

Excellent news - researchers seeking novel analgesic substances have recently "discovered" this new herb that has been used for centuries, as a pain-relieving botanical. This beautiful plant works directly on nociception, our physical perception of pain.

Ancient Wisdom

Invigorates blood, strongly stops pain, promotes movement of Qi, and unblocks obstruction of Qi and blood. $^{(1,2)}$

Modern Understanding & Uses

Treats pain and inflammation with its anti-nociceptive properties. Research shows that Corydalis interacts with the dopamine D2 receptor and attributes to its analgesic effects in acute muscular and nerve pain.⁽³⁾ Remember, nociception is how your body tells your brain about painful, or noxious, stimuli.

Further, studies have demonstrated that unlike other analgesics, Yan Hu Suo does not lose potency over time.⁽⁴⁾ Meaning, you can take this for prolonged periods (at appropriate doses) without diminishing effects or building a tolerance.

Researchers have found Yan Hu Suo to be effective in managing low to moderate levels of chronic pain. The main compound attributed to this is dehydrocorybulbine, or DHCB.⁽⁵⁾ The researchers were excited to "discover" a new natural analgesic, from an herb that has been employed for centuries as a pain-reliever.

Traditional Application

Treats pain of any kind affecting the chest, abdomen, or limbs (including from trauma), epigastric pain, dysmenorrhea, and insomnia.

Dosing Recommendations

Traditional: 3-9g, no more than 20g Modern: 2-4mL tincture⁽²⁾

Special Notes

Avoid if pregnant.

Toxic at doses of 60-120g (symptoms appearing 1-4 hours after ingestion)

Botanically related to the opium poppy plant.⁽²⁾

Stronger than Yu Jin for moving Qi and removing obstructions, or Curcuma tuber.⁽²⁾

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Hurb

Camphor

Latin Name

Cinnamomum camphora

Other Name(s)

Zhang Nao (TCM), Karpura (Ayurveda)

Quick Description

A tree substance that is found in many topical painrelieving ointments, oils, and balms. This aromatic crystal can not only treat your pain, but also treat your exposure to toxins. Enjoy this fragrant plant preparation regularly to ease your aches.

Ancient Wisdom

Expels wind and turbidity, stops pain, and expels blood stagnation.⁽¹⁾

Modern Understanding & Uses

Treats rheumatism, muscle pain, sprains, bronchitis, asthma, and several other novel uses. A recent cancer study showed that camphor applied before radiotherapy correlated to a reduction in tumor growth.⁽²⁾

Another study demonstrated that camphor may have DNA-protective qualities from exposure to environmental toxins (i.e, herbicides).⁽²⁾

Traditional Application

Treats injuries from falls, fractures, contusions, sprains, toothache, pain and swelling from blood stasis, distending pain in the chest and abdomen, and traumatic injury.⁽¹⁾

Treats asthma, whooping cough, bronchitis, pulmonary congestion, delirium, insomnia, and gout.⁽³⁾

Dosing Recommendations

Traditional: 0.1-0.2g, up to 2.5g (use cautiously) Modern: 3-11% concentration for topical use

Special Notes

Topical application only, caution when taken internally, contraindicated during pregnancy and with infants.

Lethal for adults when taken internally at doses of 7-15g.

Also treats chest congestion.

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Ancient Wisdom

Hemp has been with us for a long while. A hemp rope was discovered in Europe that dated back to 29,000 years. Human cultivation of this plant can be traced back 12,000 years. The first recorded medical use of this plant dates back nearly 5,000 years in China.⁽¹⁾

Modern Understanding & Uses

Research does show that the combination of CBD + THC is more effective for clearing biomarkers of inflammation. Suggesting that the more THC a person can tolerate with high CBD levels, the better the overall outcome for reduction of pain.⁽²⁾

Still, CBD may attenuate the psychoactive effects of THC. CBD is already a powerful anti-inflammatory agent itself.⁽²⁾

There have been studies performed that show CBD to be helpful in chronic pain, mainly in those with Multiple Sclerosis and neuropathic (nerve) pain.⁽³⁾ These researchers also concluded, "that light to moderate cannabis smoking does not adversely affect lung function over about twenty years." They also concluded, that the same level of marijuana smoking (independent of tobacco smoking) is "not associated with lung cancer or head and neck cancer."⁽³⁾

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CBD may lead to an increase in serum anandamide (the "bliss molecule" in cacao.) This feel-good chemical compound modulates pain, so by halting its absorption in the body, CBD keep more anandamide in the blood limiting the perception of pain.⁽⁴⁾

Topical application of CBD has been shown to reduce arthritic pain in joints.⁽⁴⁾

One study not only demonstrated CBD's effective use in treating chronic pain and reducing inflammation but also that increasing the dose may not be necessary as patients "were not likely to build up a tolerance to the effects of CBD."⁽⁴⁾

Cannabinoid receptors have been discovered in great concentrations among peripheral nerves. These nerves detect and send pain signals to the central nervous system. CBD seems to block the signals of pain to the brain.⁽⁵⁾

It is important to note that some studies demonstrate that THC may heighten a person's sensitivity to pain.⁽⁵⁾ Though, THC may augment CBD's pain management efficacy. This suggests that marijuana's pain reduction activity may be from CBD mainly, in concert with THC, but not from THC alone.

Still, studies on cancer patients have shown that 10mg of THC is as effective in relieving pain as 60mg 120mg of codeine.⁽⁵⁾ THC + CBD, when smoked, shows demonstrably lower serum cytokine levels directly after use.⁽⁶⁾ This is a biomarker for inflammation, so the lower the better.



Traditional Application

Cannabis seeds (Huo Ma Ren - TCM) have been employed as laxatives, especially helpful for elderly patients in treating constipation. Used to nourish Yin, clear heat, and moisten the body. Topically good for sores, and also benefits hair growth. The seeds have been processed and cannot germinate making them legal for use.⁽⁷⁾

Dosing Recommendations

Modern: CBD Oil 2.5 - 40 mg taken internally Topically: 1-10mg per application

Special Notes

CBD from commercial hemp production is legal across the board. CBD from marijuana production is legal to those with a medical marijuana card or in those states where recreational marijuana has been legalized.

There is much controversy over this herb still. Even though "medical marijuana" is part of scientific research, the legality of this botanical makes for medical exclusion in some instances.

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Hurb

Cayenne

Latin Name

Capsicum annum

Other Name(s)

Capsacum, hot pepper, African chili, Louisiana long pepper, paprika, tabasco pepper

Quick Description

Many know the fiery power of this herb, and research shows our ancestors have known about its prolific uses for thousands of years. One doctor famously said, "If you master only one herb in your life, master cayenne pepper." (Dr. Richard Schulze)

Ancient Wisdom

"Cayenne doctors" were herbalists armed with native knowledge of healing. One healer equated life with heat, and death with cold. Therefore, they mastered the use of cayenne pepper, and other warming stimulants. Dr. Patrick Quillin wrote a whole book based on this indigenous knowledge titled, The Healing Power of Cayenne Pepper.⁽⁶⁾ Was cultivated by the Incas, Mayans, and Aztec (3000 BCE), and is said to have been used by the indigenous tribes of North America over 9000 yearsago.⁽⁷⁾

Modern Understanding & Uses

Treats arthritic pain, muscle pain, neuralgia, and postmastectomy pain.⁽¹⁾

Capsaicin is the main ingredient in cayenne that is attributable to the analgesic effect one experiences when applied topically.

Treats painful joints (osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis), chronic pain, post-herpetic neuralgia (shingles pain), cluster and migraine headaches (when applied in the nostrils), lower back pain, bursitis, peripheral neuropathy, and fibromyalgia.^(2,4)

Used topically, this botanical extract de-sensitizes local nerves, lending to its short-term pain relief qualities.⁽³⁾

33

Increases circulation from its hot nature.⁽⁶⁾

Said to act on Substance P, a neurotransmitter that sends pain signals to the nervous system.⁽⁶⁾

Traditional Application

Treats numerous pain types (arthritic, nerve, muscular), indigestion, constipation, cough, fatigue (physical and mental), headaches, low libido, skin conditions, toothache, worms and parasites, and detoxification.^(6,7)

Dosing Recommendations

Modern: 0.025-0.075% extract

Special Notes

Also treats psoriasis.

A catalyst herb from it stimulatory actions.

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