

# HERBS THAT RELIEVE FOOD STAGNATION

Revised: 8/19/2019

**Sources:**

- Bensky, D. (2004). *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*. Seattle, WA: Eastland Press. pp. 493-506
- Chen, J. and Chen, T. (2004). *Chinese Medical Herbology and Pharmacology*. Art of Medicine Press. pp. 520-536

## Herbs that Relieve Food Stagnation

- These herbs are for digestive disorders, usually a result of eating too much food at one time:
  - Abdominal mass, epigastric pain and distention
  - Nausea, belching, acid regurgitation
  - Aversion to food
  - Gas, bloating
- When treating food stagnation, it is important to combine herbs to address the complicating or underlying factors:
  - For food stagnation, these herbs are often combined with herbs that **move middle-jiao qi**
  - For **heat** that results from stagnation, these herbs are combined with herbs that clear heat
  - For **dampness** secondary to food stagnation, add aromatic herbs to transform dampness and awaken the Spleen
  - For food stagnation due to underlying deficiency, add herbs that tonify Spleen qi
  - In severe cases, **purgatives** can be added

## Herbs that Relieve Food Stagnation

<b>Taste:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sweet</li></ul>
<b>Temperature:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• neutral, warm</li></ul>
<b>Channels:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SP/ST</li></ul>
<b>Main Action:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce/dissolve/digest food stagnation</li><li>• Guide out accumulation</li></ul>
<b>Cautions &amp; Contraindications:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These herbs can be dispersing; use caution in cases of deficiency</li></ul>
<b>Other:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Often combined with herbs that regulate middle-jiao qi</li></ul>

## Herbs that Relieve Food Stagnation

- shān zhā
- shén qū
- gǔ yá
- mài yá
- lái fú zǐ
- jī nèi jīn

# shān zhā

## *crataegi fructus*

山楂

**Temp:** slightly warm  
**Taste:** sour, sweet  
**Channels:** LV, SP, ST  
**Dosage:** 9-12 grams

1. relieves food stagnation
  - esp for food stagnation caused by meats and fatty foods
2. invigorates blood
  - for postpartum abdominal pain and clumping due to blood stagnation
3. stops diarrhea
4. lowers high blood pressure and cholesterol

Shan Zha is hawthorn berry.  
To enhance Shan Zha's ability to relieve food stagnation, Shan Zha should be stir-fried.  
Large doses are contraindicated during pregnancy, as this can lead to fetal death.

# shén qū

## *massa medicata fermentata*

神曲

**Temp:** warm  
**Taste:** sweet, acrid  
**Channels:** SP, ST  
**Dosage:** 6-15 grams

1. relieves food stagnation
  - esp for food stagnation caused by starches, grain, and alcohol

Shen Qu is a fermented mix of wheat flour, bran, and herbs such as Xing Ren, Chi Xiao Dou (adzuki bean), Qing Hao, and Cang Er Cao. There is no standard recipe.

Shen Qu also aides the digestion of decoctions or pills that contain metals and minerals.

# gǔ yá

## *seterariae fructus germinatus*

**Temp:** neutral

**Taste:** sweet

**Channels:** SP, ST

**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

谷  
芽

1. relieves food stagnation
  - esp for food stagnation caused by starchy foods
2. strengthens middle-jiao
  - for weak digestion or loss of appetite due to Spleen deficiency

Gu Ya is sprouted grain, usually rice or millet.

# mài yá

## *hordei fructus germinata*

**Temp:** neutral

**Taste:** sweet

**Channels:** LV, SP, ST

**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

麦  
芽

1. relieves food stagnation
  - esp for food stagnation caused by starchy foods
2. strengthens middle-jiao
  - for weak digestion or loss of appetite due to Spleen deficiency
3. stops lactation
  - to purposely stop lactation, use a larger dosage (30-60g)

Mai Ya is sprouted barley.

# lái fú zǐ

## *raphani semen*

**Temp:** neutral

**Taste:** acrid, sweet

**Channels:** LU, SP, ST

**Dosage:** 4.5-9 grams (crush first)

### 1. relieves food stagnation

- esp for a full, stifling sensation in the upper abdomen, belching with a rotten smell, acid regurgitation

### 2. descends Lung qi and transforms phlegm

- for coughing and wheezing with copious phlegm

### 3. lowers high blood pressure

Lai Fu Zi is daikon radish seed.

莱  
菔  
子

# jī nèi jīn

## *gigeriae galli endothelium corneum*

**Temp:** neutral

**Taste:** sweet

**Channels:** SP, ST, SI, UB

**Dosage:** 3-9 grams

### 1. strongly relieves food stagnation

- also for childhood nutritional impairment

### 2. secures Kidney essence

- for incontinence, bed-wetting, seminal emission, etc.
- not quite the same as inducing astringency

### 3. dissolves stones

- for gallbladder and kidney stones

Ji Nei Jin is the lining of a chicken's gizzard. The gizzard is part of the chicken's digestive system, so Ji Nei Jin is good for digestion. Chickens also eat rocks and pebbles to help digest, so Ji Nei Jin is good for dissolving stones.

鸡  
内  
金

## Extra Information

- There are three herbs that are famous for dissolving stones (kidney stones and gallbladder stones). They each have ‘gold’ in the name:
  - Jin Qian Cao
  - Hai Jin Sha
  - Ji Nei Jin
- The principal formula for food stagnation is *Bao He Wan* (*‘preserve harmony pill’*). It contains many of the herbs in this category, along with herbs that move middle-jiao qi.
- Overconsumption of alcohol is also considered food stagnation. Thus *Bao He Wan* can be used to prevent or treat hangover. It is a very safe formula, since most of its ingredients are foods. You can take as much as you want as often as you want without side effects.

## Summary

**shan zha**  
*crataegi fructus*

relieves food stagnation  
• meat and fatty food

• lowers high blood pressure and cholesterol  
• invigorates blood

**shen qu**  
*massa medicata fermentata*

relieves food stagnation  
• starchy food and alcohol

**gu ya**  
*setariae fructus germinatus*

relieves food stagnation  
• starchy food

• strengthen middle-jiao

**mai ya**  
*hordei fructus germinatus*

relieves food stagnation  
• starchy food

• strengthen middle-jiao  
• stops lactation

**lai fu zi**  
*raphani semen*

relieves food stagnation  
• fullness in abdomen

• descends LU qi (cough with phlegm)

**ji nei jin**  
*gigeriae galli endothelium cornuem*

relieves food stagnation

• secures KI essence  
• dissolves stones