

Introduction to Herbology

Downward Draining Herbs

Downward-Draining Herbs

Downward-Draining Herbs promote movement through the large intestine. This can be done to relieve constipation, or as a way to drain heat out of the body.

Purgatives - These herbs strongly promote movement in the Large intestine. They should not be used with seniors, children, or people with a weak constitution. They are typically bitter and cold, and they treat constipation due to heat.

Moist Laxatives - These herbs tend to be oily seeds. Unlike Purgatives, Moist Laxatives gently relieve constipation and may take some time to work.

Harsh Expellants - These herbs are very strong and usually toxic. They should only be used in small doses, and only if the patient is strong enough to take them.

Harsh Expellants induce watery diarrhea to treat severe edema in the chest and abdomen (e.g. pleurisy, ascites). Three of Gan Cao's incompatible herbs belong to this category (Gan Sui, Da Ji, Yuan Hua).

Downward Draining Herbs

Purgative	Da Huang	Promotes movement in Large Intestine to relieve constipation.
Moist Laxative	Huo Ma Ren	Moistens dryness to relieve constipation.
Harsh Expellant	Gan Sui	Induces diarrhea to drain excess fluids.

Downward Draining Herbs

Purgative	Da Huang	Promotes movement in Large Intestine to relieve constipation.	cold, bitter
Moist Laxative	Huo Ma Ren	Moistens dryness to relieve constipation.	neutral, sweet
Harsh Expellant	Gan Sui	Induces diarrhea to drain excess fluids.	toxic

dà huáng

rhei radix et rhizoma

大
黄

Temp: cold

Taste: bitter

Channels: HT, LI, LV, ST

Dosage: 3-15 grams (for purgative effect, cook only 3-5 min.)

1. purges Large Intestine to relieve constipation
 - for Yang Ming Bowel disease (fever, constipation, abdominal pain)
2. clears heat and drains fire
 - for heat in the intestines and upper body (fever, sore throat, painful eyes)
 - cools blood to stop bleeding (hemorrhoids, blood in stool); use charred
3. invigorates blood
 - for fixed, sharp pain; abdominal masses; amenorrhea due to stagnation
 - for injury and trauma (can be used externally)
4. dries dampness to relieve jaundice

dà huáng

rhei radix et rhizoma

大
黄

(continued)

- Because it is so strong, Da Huang is nicknamed **The General** (Jian Jun)
- Da Huang is used for **Yang Ming Bowel disease**, characterized by heat bind in the Stomach and Large Intestine, abdominal pain that worsens with pressure, and constipation
- Because it purges the Large Intestine, clears heat, invigorates blood, and stops bleeding, Da Huang is especially useful for **Large Intestine abscess and appendicitis**
- Da Huang is so strong at invigorating blood, it is said that it “cracks the blood.” Because of its strong moving action and its strong downward action, it is **contraindicated during pregnancy**
- **Use caution during breastfeeding**, as its purgative effect may come through in the breastmilk
- Da Huang can **used in its charred form to stop bleeding**, especially for hemorrhoid and blood in the stool. This is useful because it can stop bleeding without causing stagnation.
- Da Huang is so good and invigorating blood and clearing heat, it can be **used topically for injury and trauma** when there is redness, swelling and heat, as in San Huang San (nicknamed *Herbal Ice*)

huǒ má rén

cannabis semen

火
麻
仁

Temp: neutral

Taste: sweet

Channels: LI, SP, ST

Dosage: 9-15 grams (crush before decocting)

1. moistens Large Intestine to relieve constipation
 - for dry constipation due to yin or blood deficiency
 - for constipation after febrile disease, in the elderly, or postpartum
2. nourishes yin
3. clears heat and heals sores
 - used internally or externally for mouth sores due to Stomach heat
 - mild; used as an auxiliary herb

Overuse of Huo Ma Ren can cause upset stomach or mild shen problems (agitation, restlessness, confusion).

gān suì

kansui radix

甘
遂

Temp: cold

Taste: bitter, sweet, toxic

Channels: KI, LI, LU

Dosage: 0.5-1.5 grams

1. induces watery diarrhea to treat edema
 - for severe accumulation of fluid in the chest and abdomen
 - for general edema, facial edema, abdominal distention
2. drives out phlegm
 - for severe phlegm accumulation
 - e.g. seizures due to wind-phlegm, shen problems due to phlegm
3. used topically to reduce swelling
 - for skin problems due to damp-heat

"This is a violent, cathartic herb that causes one to pass water anally." -Bensky
Contraindicated during pregnancy.