

# HERBS THAT TONIFY QI

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**Sources:**

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## Herbs that Tonify Qi

Most disorders of qi deficiency involve the Spleen or the Lungs, as these are the two sources of post-natal qi.

- **Spleen Qi Xu:** lethargy, weak extremities, poor appetite, abdominal pain, loose stools, diarrhea
- **Lung Qi Xu:** S.O.B, weak voice, pale complexion, spontaneous sweating
- **Heart Qi Xu:** irregular pulse, palpitation

When Spleen qi is deficient, the Spleen may fail to transform fluids resulting in edema and fluid retention.

When the Spleen is deficient, it may fail in its function to raise the clear yang, result in certain “sinking” conditions, such as organ prolapse.

## Herbs that Tonify Qi

<b>Taste:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sweet</li></ul>
<b>Temperature:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• warm</li></ul>
<b>Channels:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LU, SP</li></ul>
<b>Cautions &amp; Contraindications:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These herbs are sweet and rich</li><li>• Excessive or chronic use may cause fullness in chest or heat signs</li></ul>
<b>Main Action:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tonify qi of the Spleen and Lung</li></ul>
<b>Other:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Combine with herbs that move or regulate qi to prevent stagnation (e.g. chen pi, mu xiang, sha ren)</li></ul>

## Herbs that Tonify Qi

- rén shēn
- dǎng shēn
- tài zǐ shēn
- huáng qí
- bái zhú
- gān cǎo
- shān yào
- dà zǎo
- bái biǎn dòu
- huáng jīng
- yí táng



### 18 Incompatible Herbs:

**Gan Cao** is incompatible with Da Ji, Gan Sui, Hai Zao, Yuan Hua

# rén shēn

## *ginseng radix*

人  
參

**Temp:** slightly warm

**Taste:** sweet, slightly bitter

**Channels:** LU, SP

**Dosage:** 3-9 grams (cook separately in double boiler)

### 1. tonifies qi

- tonifies Spleen qi
- tonifies Lung qi
- tonifies Heart qi
- tonifies original qi; for qi collapse

### 2. generates fluids and alleviates thirst

- for wasting and thirsting disorder
- for febrile diseases where both the qi and fluids have been damaged



# xī yáng shēn

## *panacis quinquefolii radix*

西  
洋  
參

**Temp:** cold

**Taste:** sweet, slightly bitter

**Channels:** HT, KI, LU

**Dosage:** 3-6 grams

### 1. tonifies qi

### 2. tonifies yin

Xi Yang Shen is American ginseng. It is sometimes put in the category *Herbs that Tonify Yin*.

Xi Yang Shen differs from Ren Shen in three ways:

1. Xi Yang Shen is colder in temperature than Ren Shen
2. Xi Yang Shen is weaker at tonifying qi than Ren Shen
3. Xi Yang Shen is stronger at generating body fluids than Ren Shen

# dǎng shēn

*codonopsis radix*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** LU, SP  
**Dosage:** 6-9 grams (or up to 30 grams)

1. tonifies qi
  - tonifies Lung qi
  - tonifies middle-jiao qi
2. generates body fluids

- By tonifying qi, Dang Shen can indirectly tonify blood and fluids
- Dang Shen is often used in conjunction with Herbs that Release the Exterior for exterior attacks with underlying deficiency
- In formulas, Dang Shen can be used as a substitute for Ren Shen, usually at double the dosage.



党参

# tài zǐ shēn

*pseudostellariae radix*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet, slightly bitter  
**Channels:** LU, SP  
**Dosage:** 9-30 grams

1. tonifies middle-jiao qi and Lung qi
  - weaker than Ren Shen
2. generates body fluids
  - esp. for thirst in the aftermath of febrile disease
  - for unrelenting fever or summerheat in children

Tai Zi Shen is weaker than Ren Shen, so its dosage is higher.



太子参

# huáng qí

*astragali radix*

**Temp:** slightly warm  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** SP, LU  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

黄  
芪

1. tonifies Lung qi
  - seals pores and strengthens wei qi
  - for spontaneous sweating and preventing illness
2. tonifies Spleen qi
  - raises yang; for prolapse
3. promotes urination to treat edema
  - for edema caused by Spleen qi deficiency
4. promotes flesh regeneration
  - for chronic sores and ulcerations due to deficiency



# bái zhú

*atractylodis macrocephalae rhizoma*

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

白  
朮

1. tonifies qi
  - tonifies middle-jiao qi
  - stabilizes exterior and stops sweating
2. dries dampness
  - for edema due to Spleen deficiency
3. calms restless fetus



# gān cǎo

## *glycyrrhizae radix*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** HT, LU, SP, ST (all 12 channels)  
**Dosage:** 1.5-9 grams

甘草

1. tonifies qi
  - tonifies Heart qi and Spleen qi
2. moistens Lung and stops cough
3. relieves spasm and pain
4. clears heat toxicity
5. moderates and harmonizes other herbs

To enhance Gan Cao's ability to tonify qi, it should be stir-fried with honey (Zhi Gan Cao).



# shān yào

## *dioscoreae rhizoma*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** KI, LU, SP  
**Dosage:** 9-30 grams (also used in food therapy)

山药

1. tonifies middle-jiao qi
2. tonifies Lung qi and Lung yin
  - for chronic cough and wheezing due to deficiency
3. tonifies Kidney and secures essence
  - for Kidney-related leakage, such as frequent urination, seminal emission, vaginal discharge etc.
  - for wasting and thirsting disorder



# dà zǎo

*jujube fructus*

**Temp:** warm

**Taste:** sweet

**Channels:** SP, ST

**Dosage:** 10-30 grams or 3-12 pieces (also used in food therapy)

大  
枣

1. tonifies Spleen qi
2. tonifies blood to calm shen
  - for anxiety, depression, Heart palpitation
3. moderates and harmonizes other herbs



# bái biǎn dòu

*lablab semen album*

**Temp:** neutral

**Taste:** sweet

**Channels:** SP, ST

**Dosage:** 9-30 grams (also used in food therapy)

白  
扁  
豆

1. tonifies Spleen qi and transforms dampness
  - for diarrhea and reduced appetite SP deficiency
  - for vaginal discharge due to SP deficiency
2. clears summerheat
  - for summerheat-dampness with vomiting and diarrhea



Bai Bian Dou is hyacinth bean.

To increase Bai Bian Dou's action of tonifying qi, it should be dry-fried (Chao Bai Bian Dou).

Can also be used to treat vomiting due to food poisoning.

# huáng jīng

*polygonati rhizoma*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** LU, SP, KI  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

1. tonifies qi
  - majorly for middle-jiao and Lung qi
2. generates body fluids
  - for Lung and Stomach yin deficiency
3. tonifies Kidney yin and essence
  - mild

Huang Jing is sticky and cloying and may cause digestive problems.



黄  
精

# yí táng

*maltosum*

**Temp:** slightly warm  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** SP, ST, LU  
**Dosage:** 15-60 grams (stir in at end; do not decoct)

1. tonifies middle-jiao qi
  - stops pain due to middle-jiao qi deficiency
2. nourishes Lung yin
  - for dry cough

饴  
糖



# jīng mǐ (gēng mǐ)

## *semen oryzae*

粳米

**Temp:** warm  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** SP, ST  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

1. tonifies Spleen and Lung qi
2. tonifies yang
3. generates fluids and alleviates thirst

Jing Mi is non-glutinous rice.

## Summary

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**ren shen**  
*ginseng radix*

tonifies qi  
• SP, LU, HT, primal qi  
• all the qi

• generates fluids

**dang shen**  
*codonopsis radix*

tonifies qi

• often used as a substitute for ren shen

**tai zi shen**  
*psuedostellariae radix*

tonifies qi

• often used as a substitute for ren shen  
• higher dosage

**huang qi**  
*astragal radix*

tonifies qi  
• LU qi (stops sweating, strengthen wei qi)  
• SP qi (raises SP qi, counters sinking)

• regenerates flesh  
• promotes urination to treat edema

**bai zhu**  
*atractylodis macrocephalae rhizoma*

tonifies qi  
• SP qi  
• stabilizes exterior, stops sweating

• dries dampness  
• calms restless fetus

**gan cao**  
*glycyrrhizae radix*

tonifies qi  
• SP & HT

- moistens LU
- clears heat toxicity
- relieves cramping and spasm
- harmonizes herbs

**shan yao**  
*dioscorea rhizoma*

tonifies qi  
• SP qi

- LU qi leakage
- secures KI essence (KI leakage)
- generates body fluids

**da zao**  
*jujube fructus*

tonifies qi  
• SP qi

- tonifies HT blood to calm shen

**bai bian dou**  
*lablab semen alba*

tonifies qi  
• SP qi (diarrhea)

- treats dampness and summer heat
- use in food therapy

**huang jing**  
*polygonati rhizoma*

tonifies qi  
• SP & LU

- generates body fluids
- tonifies KI yin (mild)

**yi tang**  
*maltose*

tonifies qi  
• SP qi (abdominal pain due to deficiency)

- stir into strained decoction after cooking