

Dú Huó Jì Shēng Tāng (Angelica Pubescens and Taxillus Decoction)

獨活寄生湯 独活寄生汤

Pinyin Name: *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang*

Literal Name: Angelica Pubescens and Taxillus Decoction

Alternate Names: *Tu Huo Chi Sheng Tang*, Tu-huo and Loranthus Decoction, Pubescent Angelica and Loranthus Decoction, Tuhuo and Taxillus Combination

Original Source: *Bei Ji Qian Jin Yao Fang* (Thousands of Golden Prescriptions for Emergencies) by Sun Si-Miao in the Tang Dynasty

COMPOSITION

<i>Du Huo</i> (Radix Angelicae Pubescentis)	9g
<i>Xi Xin</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Asari)	6g
<i>Fang Feng</i> (Radix Saposhnikoviae)	6g
<i>Qin Jiao</i> (Radix Gentianae Macrophyllae)	6g
<i>Sang Ji Sheng</i> (Herba Taxilli)	6g
<i>Du Zhong</i> (Cortex Eucommiae)	6g
<i>Chuan Niu Xi</i> (Radix Cyathulae)	6g
<i>Dang Gui</i> (Radix Angelicae Sinensis)	6g
<i>Chuan Xiong</i> (Rhizoma Chuanxiong)	6g
<i>Di Huang</i> (Radix Rehmanniae)	6g
<i>Bai Shao</i> (Radix Paeoniae Alba)	6g
<i>Ren Shen</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng)	6g
<i>Fu Ling</i> (Poria)	6g
<i>Gui Xin</i> (Cortex Rarus Cinnamomi)	6g
<i>Gan Cao</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae)	6g

DOSAGE / PREPARATION / ADMINISTRATION

The source text instructs to grind the ingredients into a coarse powder and cook it in 10 cups of water until the liquid is reduced to 3 cups. Take the warm, strained decoction in three equally divided doses. The source text also advises to keep the body warm and to avoid exposure to cold.

CHINESE THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS

1. Dispels wind-dampness
2. Relieves *bi zheng* (painful obstruction syndrome)
3. Nourishes the Liver and Kidney
4. Tonifies qi and blood

CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

Chronic *bi zheng* (painful obstruction syndrome) with Liver and Kidney insufficiencies and qi and blood deficiencies: soreness and pain in the lower back and stifles, stiffness with difficult and limited range of motion in the limbs and extremities, aversion to cold and a preference for warmth, a pale tongue with a white tongue coating, and a thin, weak pulse.

VETERINARY CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

Chronic cervical and back pain, osteoarthritis of the spine, hips, stifles, and hocks; spondylosis, thoracic-lumbar intervertebral disk disease, lumbosacral disease, canine hip dysplasia, tears of the anterior cruciate ligament, patellar luxation pain and orthopedic post-surgical recovery.

EXPLANATION

Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang (Angelica Pubescens and Taxillus Decoction) treats *bi zheng* (painful obstruction syndrome) characterized by chronic accumulation of wind, cold, and dampness with Liver and Kidney insufficiencies and qi and blood deficiencies. This syndrome begins with accumulation of wind, cold, and dampness in the channels and collaterals. As they obstruct qi and blood circulation, malnourishment of the Liver and Kidney occurs. If this condition becomes chronic, qi, blood, Liver, and Kidney all become deficient. Thus, besides having aches and pains, the patient may also experience weakness of the knees and lower back, as well as difficulty in moving the limbs and extremities.

Since this condition is complicated by both excess (accumulation of wind, cold, and dampness) and deficiency (of the Liver, Kidney, qi, and blood), optimal treatment

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Diagnosis	Clinical Signs	Treatment	Herbs
Chronic <i>bi zheng</i> (painful obstruction syndrome) with excess and deficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soreness and pain in the lower back and stifles: wind-dampness affecting the muscles Stiffness with difficult, limited range of motion in the limbs and extremities, aversion to cold and a preference for warmth: qi, blood, Liver and Kidney deficiencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispels wind-dampness and stops pain Nourishes the Liver and Kidney Tonifies qi and blood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Du Huo</i> (Radix Angelicae Pubescentis) and <i>Xi Xin</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Asari) dispel wind, cold, and dampness. <i>Fang Feng</i> (Radix Saposhnikoviae) and <i>Qin Jiao</i> (Radix Gentianae Macrophyllae) dispel wind-dampness. <i>Sang Ji Sheng</i> (Herba Taxilli), <i>Du Zhong</i> (Cortex Eucommiae), and <i>Chuan Niu Xi</i> (Radix Cyathulae) dispel wind and dampness and tonify the Liver and Kidney. <i>Dang Gui</i> (Radix Angelicae Sinensis), <i>Chuan Xiong</i> (Rhizoma Chuanxiong), <i>Di Huang</i> (Radix Rehmanniae), and <i>Bai Shao</i> (Radix Paeoniae Alba) tonify and activate blood circulation. <i>Ren Shen</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng) and <i>Fu Ling</i> (Poria) strengthen the Spleen and tonify qi. <i>Gui Xin</i> (Cortex Rarus Cinnamomi) warms the channels and opens the blood vessels. <i>Gan Cao</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae) harmonizes the herbs.

requires the use of herbs that concurrently dispel wind, cold, and dampness, as well as herbs that nourish the Liver and Kidney, tonify qi and blood, and relieve pain.

In this formula, a large dose of *Du Huo* (Radix Angelicae Pubescentis) is used to dispel wind, cold, and dampness in the lower parts of the body. *Xi Xin* (Radix et Rhizoma Asari) disperses wind, cold, and dampness and relieves pain. *Fang Feng* (Radix Saposhnikoviae) dispels wind and dampness. *Qin Jiao* (Radix Gentianae Macrophyllae) dispels wind and dampness and soothes the tendons. *Sang Ji Sheng* (Herba Taxilli), *Du Zhong* (Cortex Eucommiae), and *Chuan Niu Xi* (Radix Cyathulae) dispel wind and dampness and also tonify the Liver and Kidney. *Dang Gui* (Radix Angelicae Sinensis), *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong), *Di Huang* (Radix Rehmanniae), and *Bai Shao* (Radix Paeoniae Alba) tonify blood and activate blood circulation. *Ren Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng) and *Fu Ling* (Poria) strengthen the Spleen and tonify qi. *Gui Xin* (Cortex Rarus Cinnamomi) warms the channels and opens the blood vessels. *Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae) harmonizes the herbs in the formula.

VETERINARY MODIFICATIONS

- For *tong bi* (extremely painful obstruction) with more cold, add *Fu Zi* (Radix Aconiti Lateralis Praeparata) and *Gan Jiang* (Rhizoma Zingiberis).
- For *zhuo bi* (fixed painful obstruction) with more dampness, remove *Shu Di Huang* (Radix Rehmanniae Praeparata), and add *Fang Ji* (Radix Stephaniae

Tetrandrae), *Yi Yi Ren* (Semen Coicis), and *Cang Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis).

- For *xue bi* (blood painful obstruction) with blood stagnation, add *Hong Hua* (Flos Carthami) and *Tao Ren* (Semen Persicae).
- With sore back and painful stifles, add *Qiang Huo* (Rhizoma et Radix Notopterygii) and *Xu Duan* (Radix Dipsaci).
- With severe pain, add *Zhi Chuan Wu* (Radix Aconiti Praeparata), *Zhi Cao Wu* (Radix Aconiti Kusnezoffii Praeparata), *Yan Hu Suo* (Rhizoma Corydalis), *Jin Qian Bai Hua She* (Bungarus Parvus), *Di Long* (Pheretima), and *Hong Hua* (Flos Carthami).
- With muscle weakness, add *Huang Qi* (Radix Astragalii) and *Bai Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae).

CAUTIONS / CONTRAINDICATIONS

- Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* should be used with caution during pregnancy.
- This formula is contraindicated in *bi zheng* (painful obstruction syndrome) caused by excess heat or damp-heat.

PHARMACOLOGICAL EFFECTS

- Analgesic and anti-inflammatory:** *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* has been shown to relieve pain and reduce inflammation in both rats and mice.^{1,2}
- Anti-inflammatory:** Administration of *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* or *Dang Gui Nian Tong Tang* (Tangkuei Decoction to Lift the Pain) was associated with marked anti-inflammatory effects in suppressing the development of chronic

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arthritis induced by carrageenan or complete Freund's adjuvant. The researchers suggested that these herbal formulas may be considered as alternatives for non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID).³

- 3. Circulatory:** One study reported decreased vascular resistance and increased blood perfusion to the brain using *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* administered orally or via injection.⁴
- 4. Antiplatelet:** *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* was shown to have a significant antiplatelet effect in rabbits.⁵

HUMAN CLINICAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH

- 1. Neck pain:** Use of modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* in one study for 1-4 courses of treatment was associated with 97% effectiveness. Of 69 patients, the study reported complete recovery in 41 cases, significant improvement in 20 cases, moderate improvement in 6 cases, and no effect in 2 cases.⁶ In another neck pain study, modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* in 43 patients was associated with significant improvement in 31 cases, improvement in 8 cases, and slight improvement in 4 cases. The herbal treatment contained *Du Huo* (Radix Angelicae Pubescentis), *Dang Shen* (Radix Codonopsis), *Du Zhong* (Cortex Eucommiae), *Sang Ji Sheng* (Herba Taxilli), *Shu Di Huang* (Radix Rehmanniae Praeparata), *Fu Ling* (Poria), *Bai Shao* (Radix Paeoniae Alba), *Qin Jiao* (Radix Gentianae Macrophyllae), *Fang Feng* (Radix Saposhnikoviae), *Gui Zhi* (Ramulus Cinnamomi), *Chuan Niu Xi* (Radix Cyathulae), *Niu Xi* (Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae), *Dang Gui* (Radix Angelicae Sinensis), *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong), *Hong Hua* (Flos Carthami), *Tao Ren* (Semen Persicae), *Yan Hu Suo* (Rhizoma Corydalis), *Xi Xin* (Radix et Rhizoma Asari), and *Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae). In addition, 16 mL of a *Dan Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Salviae Miltiorrhizae) preparation was given via injection one time daily.⁷
- 2. Sciatica:** In one study, use of modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* in 100 patients with sciatica was associated with recovery in 87 cases, significant improvement in 7 cases, moderate improvement in 3 cases, and no effect in 3 cases.⁸ Another study reported significant relief of numbness and pain within 5 packs of modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* in 65 of 80 patients.⁹ Additionally, use of modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* was associated with complete recovery in 85 of 105 patients who suffered from sciatica due to various causes. The herbal treatment contained this formula plus *Fang Ji* (Radix Stephaniae Tetrandrae), *Hai Tong Pi* (Cortex Erythrinae), *Ru Xiang* (Gummi Olibanum), *Mo Yao* (Myrrha), and others as needed.¹⁰
- 3. Hyperosteoegeny:** Thirty patients with hyperosteoegeny of the knees were treated with complete recovery in 14 cases, significant improvement in 9 cases, moderate improvement
- 4. Osteoarthritis:** Use of modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* in 24 patients with osteoarthritis for 1 week to 3 months was associated with complete recovery in 14 cases, significant improvement in 4 cases, moderate improvement in 3 cases, and no effect in 3 cases. The overall effectiveness was 87.5%.¹² Another study of 262 patients with osteoarthritis of the knees reported 94.7% effectiveness when treated with modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang*. The clinical presentations included swelling, inflammation, and pain of the knees, with occasional deformation of the joint. The herbal treatment contained this formula plus *Wu Gong* (Scolopendra), *Mu Li* (Concha Ostreae), and others. In addition, an herbal paste was also applied topically to the affected areas. Of 262 patients, the study reported significant improvement in 77 cases, moderate improvement in 118 cases, moderate improvement in 55 cases, and no effect in 12 cases.¹³
- 5. Rheumatic arthritis:** One study reported a marked effect using *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* plus *Si Miao San* (Four-Marrow Powder) to treat rheumatic arthritis of the knees characterized by pain, swelling, inflammation, numbness, decreased range of motion, and difficulty in walking. Of 104 patients, the study reported complete recovery in 84 cases, improvement in 11 cases, and no effect in 9 cases. The overall effectiveness was 91.3%.¹⁴
- 6. Ankylosing spondylitis:** Use of modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* showed good results in treating 22 patients with a history of 3 months or more of ankylosing spondylitis characterized by stiffness and pain of the lower back. Modifications included the addition of *Gou Ji* (Rhizoma Cibotii) 10g, *Tu Si Zi* (Semen Cuscutae) 10g, and larger doses for *Sang Ji Sheng* (Herba Taxilli), *Du Zhong* (Cortex Eucommiae), and *Xu Duan* (Radix Dipsaci) for severe low back pain; *Bai Jie Zi* (Semen Sinapis) 6g, *San Leng* (Rhizoma Sparganii) 10g, and *E Zhu* (Rhizoma Curcumae) 10g were added for chronic illness with phlegm accumulation. The duration of treatment was 2 months per course of treatment. Of 22 patients, the study reported significant improvement in 6 cases, moderate improvement in 14 cases, and no effect in 2 cases. The overall effectiveness was 90.9%.¹⁵
- 7. Bi zheng (painful obstruction syndrome):** Administration of *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* three times daily for 60-90 days

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in 52 patients was associated with significant improvement in 35 cases, moderate improvement in 15 cases, and no effect in 2 cases.¹⁶ Another study reported marked effect using modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* to treat various types of *bi zheng*. The herbal treatment used this formula as the base formula, with the following modifications: *Qiang Huo* (Rhizoma et Radix Notopterygii), *Sang Zhi* (Ramulus Mori), and *Ge Gen* (Radix Puerariae Lobatae) for wind; *Ma Huang* (Herba Ephedrae) and *Xi Xin* (Radix et Rhizoma Asari) for cold; *Yi Yi Ren* (Semen Coicis), *Cang Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis), and *Mu Gua* (Fructus Chaenomelis) for dampness; *Quan Xie* (Scorpio), *Wu Gong* (Scolopendra), and *Jin Qian Bai Hua She* (Bungarus Parvus) for stubborn pain; *Chuan Shan Jia* (Squama Manis), *Tao Ren* (Semen Persicae), and *Hong Hua* (Flos Carthami) for blood stagnation; and *Ren Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng) for generalized deficiency due to chronic illness. Of 55 patients, the study reported recovery in 22 cases, improvement in 30 cases, and no effect in 3 cases.¹⁷

8. **Prolapse of lumbar intervertebral disk:** Use of modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* was associated with improvement in 46 of 50 patients with prolapse of lumbar intervertebral disk confirmed by physical exam and CT scan. The herbal treatment contained this formula with modifications based on clinical presentations. For dampness and cold, *Fu Zi* (Radix Aconiti Lateralis Praeparata) 20g was added. For damp-heat, *Huang Bo* (Cortex Phellodendri Chinensis) 15g, *Huang Qin* (Radix Scutellariae) 12g, and *Cang Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis) 15g were added, while *Gui Zhi* (Ramulus Cinnamomi), *Xi Xin* (Radix et Rhizoma Asari), and *Di Huang* (Radix Rehmanniae) were removed. For chronic pain with blood stagnation, *Dan Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Salviae Miltiorrhizae) 20g was added.¹⁸
9. **Postpartum aches and pains:** One study reported marked results using modified *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* to treat 80 women with aches and pains after labor. In addition to this formula, modifications were made by adding *Fu Zi* (Radix Aconiti Lateralis Praeparata), larger doses of *Gui Zhi* (Ramulus Cinnamomi) and *Fang Ji* (Radix Stephaniae Tetrandrae) for wind-cold; *Mu Gua* (Fructus Chaenomelis) and *Cang Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis) for dampness; *Sang Zhi* (Ramulus Mori) and *Jiang Huang* (Rhizoma Curcumae Longae) for pain in the arms and shoulders; and *Niu Xi* (Radix Achyranthis Bidentatae) for pain in the lower body. Of 80 patients, the study reported complete recovery in 58 cases, significant improvement in 14 cases, moderate improvement in 6 cases, and no effect in 2 cases.¹⁹ Note: Information is unavailable regarding whether these individuals were nursing while on the herbal treatment. Please consult additional information

on the safety status of each individual herb prior to using them for nursing mothers.

SUGGESTED ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT

1. Points: *Fengchi* (GB 20), *Dazhui* (GV 14), *Ganshu* (BL 18), *Shenshu* (BL 23), *Zhishi* (BL 52), *Taixi* (KI 3), *Housanli* (ST 36), *Sanyinjiao* (SP 6), *Yaoyangguan* (GV 3), *Weizhong* (BL 40), *Yanglingquan* (GB 34), *Kunlun* (BL 60), and local points. Classical points such as *Shenshu* and *Shenpeng* are also beneficial.
2. Technique: tonification and moxibustion.

Dazhui (GV 14) and *Fengchi* (GB 20) are two classic points that dispel wind and expel external pathogenic factors. *Ganshu* (BL 18), *Shenshu* (BL 23), *Zhishi* (BL 52) and *Taixi* (KI 3) nourish the Liver and Kidney. *Housanli* (ST 36) and *Sanyinjiao* (SP 6) tonify qi, strengthen the Spleen, nourish the blood, and activate blood circulation. *Yaoyangguan* (GV 3) warms yang to dispel cold and dampness. *Weizhong* (BL 40) relieves lower back pain, while *Yanglingquan* (GB 34) relieves muscle stiffness and cramps. *Kunlun* (BL 60) relieves generalized pain and is considered an “aspirin point.” *Shenshu* and *Shenpeng* are classical equine points that eliminate cold and warm yang. Local points may be selected to activate qi and blood circulation to relieve pain.

AUTHORS' COMMENTS

Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang is one of the most commonly used formulas in veterinary medicine to treat muscle, joint and spinal pain due to both excess and deficiency. It has found application as a preventative, recovery and direct therapeutic formula with emphasis on the back and rear quarters in veterinary patients. This formula is indicated for chronic *bi zheng* (painful obstruction syndrome) with obstruction of wind, cold, and dampness, accompanied by Liver and Kidney insufficiencies and qi and blood deficiencies; thus, it is a vital formula in the treatment of aging animals. On balance, the formula is more effective at dispersing cold than others in the category and is useful in those *bi zheng* (painful obstruction syndrome) that can be further classified as *tong bi* (extremely painful obstruction). *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* can be used as a preventative measure against rupture of the anterior cruciate ligament due to the degeneration of joints, tendons, and ligaments resulting from aging in middle age and geriatric animals or secondary to Kidney deficiencies (yin and *jing* [essence]) in younger animals. *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* is an important recovery formula to use in post-surgical spinal and coxofemoral joint patients to improve healing times and prevent further degeneration of the hips, spine and inter-vertebral disks. It is also one of the most effective

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formulas for treating non-surgical, chronic back pain in overweight, middle-aged pets, and can be combined with *Shu Jing Huo Xue Tang* (Relax the Channels and Invigorate the Blood Decoction) to increase the analgesic effects. For severe back pain in horses, so called “cold-backed” individuals, the formula can be combined with *Shen Tong Zhu Yu Tang* (Drive Out Blood Stasis from a Painful Body Decoction). *Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang* can also be combined with *Juan Bi Tang* (Remove Painful Obstruction Decoction) to treat generalized multiple joint pain from chronic osteoarthritis.

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