

Chái Hú Shū Gān Sǎn (Bupleurum Powder to Spread the Liver)

柴胡疏肝散

Pinyin Name: *Chai Hu Shu Gan San*

Literal Name: Bupleurum Powder to Spread the Liver

Alternate Names: *Chai Hu Shu Gan Tang* (Bupleurum Decoction to Spread the Liver), Bupleurum and Cyperus Combination

Original Source: *Jing Yue Quan Shu* (Collected Treatises of [Zhang] Jing Yue) by Zhang Jie-Bin (Zhang Jing-Yue) in 1624

COMPOSITION

<i>Chai Hu</i> (Radix Bupleuri)	6g
<i>Xiang Fu</i> (Rhizoma Cyperi)	4.5g
<i>Chen Pi</i> (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae), <i>chao</i> (dry-fried) with vinegar	6g
<i>Zhi Qiao</i> (Fructus Citri Aurantii), <i>chao</i> (dry-fried) with bran	4.5g
<i>Bai Shao</i> (Radix Paeoniae Alba)	4.5g
<i>Chuan Xiong</i> (Rhizoma Chuanxiong)	4.5g
<i>Zhi Gan Cao</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle)	1.5g

DOSAGE / PREPARATION / ADMINISTRATION EXPLANATION

The source text states to cook the ingredients in 1.5 bowls of water until 80% of the liquid remains. Take the warm, strained decoction before meals.

Chai Hu Shu Gan San (Bupleurum Powder to Spread the Liver) treats Liver qi stagnation. The Liver is responsible for smoothing the qi flow in the body. If Liver qi is stagnant, pain may occur. Hypochondriac pain arises from Liver qi stagnation affecting the Liver channel, which runs through these regions of the body. The qi-smoothing function of the Liver is directly related to one's emotions. If Liver qi is stagnant, emotional disorders such as restlessness, hyperactivity and irritability occur. Liver qi stagnation may cause blood stagnation. Stagnation of Liver qi (wood element) can overact on the Spleen and Stomach (earth element), causing poor digestion and abdominal pain.

CHINESE THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS

1. Regulates the Liver and promotes qi circulation
2. Harmonizes the blood and relieves pain

CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

Liver qi stagnation: hypochondriac pain, intermittent fever, trembling, restlessness, irritability, hyperactivity, poor digestion and abdominal pain.

VETERINARY CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

Cholecystitis, cholelithiasis, hepatitis, elevated liver enzymes, canine hyperadrenocorticism, gastritis, pancreatitis, peptic ulcer disease and mastitis.

Chai Hu (Radix Bupleuri) harmonizes and spreads the Liver and relieves Liver qi stagnation. *Xiang Fu* (Rhizoma Cyperi) effectively breaks up Liver qi stagnation and relieves pain. *Chen Pi* (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae) and

Chai Hu Shu Gan San (Bupleurum Powder to Spread the Liver)

Diagnosis	Clinical Signs	Treatment	Herbs
Liver qi stagnation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypochondriac pain: Liver qi stagnation along the Liver channel • Poor digestion, abdominal pain: Liver qi stagnation overacting on the Spleen and Stomach • Restlessness, hyperactivity and irritability: Liver qi stagnation affecting behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulates the Liver and promotes qi circulation • Harmonizes the blood and relieves pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Chai Hu</i> (Radix Bupleuri) harmonizes and spreads the Liver and relieves Liver qi stagnation. • <i>Xiang Fu</i> (Rhizoma Cyperi) breaks up Liver qi stagnation and relieves pain. • <i>Chen Pi</i> (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae) and <i>Zhi Qiao</i> (Fructus Aurantii) activate qi circulation and break up qi stagnation. • <i>Bai Shao</i> (Radix Paeoniae Alba) nourishes Liver blood to soften the Liver. • <i>Chuan Xiong</i> (Rhizoma Chuanxiong) activates blood circulation. • <i>Zhi Gan Cao</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle) harmonizes the herbs and relieves pain.

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Zhi Qiao (Fructus Aurantii) activate qi circulation and break up qi stagnation. *Bai Shao* (Radix Paeoniae Alba) nourishes Liver blood to soften the Liver. *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong) activates blood circulation. *Zhi Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle) harmonizes the herbs and relieves pain.

VETERINARY MODIFICATIONS

- With belching and acid reflux, add *Hai Piao Xiao* (Endoconcha Sepiae).
- If there is severe stomach pain, add *Yan Hu Suo* (Rhizoma Corydalis) and *Chuan Lian Zi* (Fructus Toosendan).
- For Liver qi stagnation that has turned into Liver fire, add *Zhi Zi* (Fructus Gardeniae) and *Chuan Lian Zi* (Fructus Toosendan).

CAUTIONS / CONTRAINDICATIONS

Chai Hu Shu Gan San is not recommended in patients with yin-deficient heat characterized by clinical signs such as a red tongue with no coating, a dry mouth and throat, restlessness, and insomnia. Similarly, this formula should be discontinued in those who develop these clinical signs after taking this formula.¹

PHARMACOLOGICAL EFFECTS

1. **Cardiovascular:** Administration of *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* via intravenous injection in rabbits was associated with a marked improvement in blood circulation to various parts of the body, including the brain, heart, and liver.²
2. **Cholagogic:** Administration of *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* in rats was associated with increased production and release of bile acid after one hour.³

HUMAN CLINICAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH

1. **Cholecystitis:** One study reported complete recovery in 25 of 30 patients with chronic cholecystitis when treated with *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* plus *Qing Pi* (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae Viride), *Yu Jin* (Radix Curcumae), *Yan Hu Suo* (Rhizoma Corydalis), *Hou Po* (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis), *Jin Qian Cao* (Herba Lysimachiae), and *Yin Chen* (Herba Artemisiae Scopariae).⁴ In another study, 132 patients with chronic cholecystitis were treated with complete recovery in 39 patients, significant improvement in 46 patients, moderate improvement in 40 patients, and no effect in 7 patients. In addition to *Chai Hu Shu Gan San*, modifications were made by adding *Yu Jin* (Radix Curcumae) and *Jin Ling Zi San* (Melia Toosendan Powder) for qi stagnation; *Jin Qian Cao* (Herba Lysimachiae), *Hu Zhang* (Rhizoma et Radix Polygoni Cuspidati), and *Huang Qin* (Radix Scutellariae) for damp-heat. Electroacupuncture and herbal injection at acupuncture points were performed, too.⁵

2. **Cholelithiasis and bile duct infection:** One hundred and sixteen patients with gallstones and infection of the bile duct were treated with complete recovery in 27 patients, significant improvement in 68 patients, moderate improvement in 16 patients, and no benefit in 5 patients. The herbal formula was modified from *Chai Hu Shu Gan San*, with addition of *Jin Qian Cao* (Herba Lysimachiae), *Da Huang* (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei), *Yu Jin* (Radix Curcumae), *Shan Zha* (Fructus Crataegi), *Huang Qin* (Radix Scutellariae), *Qing Pi* (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae Viride), and *Ji Nei Jin* (Endothelium Corneum Gigeriae Galli), and elimination of *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong).⁶
3. **Hepatitis B:** Sixty patients with chronic hepatitis B were treated with good results using modified *Chai Hu Shu Gan San*. The herbal formula contained *Chai Hu* (Radix Bupleuri) 10g, dry-fried *Bai Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) 10g, *Zhi Shi* (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) 10g, *Fu Ling* (Poria) 12g, *Yu Jin* (Radix Curcumae) 12g, *Bai Jiang Cao* (Herba cum Radice Patriniae) 12g, *Dan Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Salviae Miltiorrhizae) 20g, *Bai Hua She She Cao* (Herba Hedyotis) 15g, *Chi Shao* (Radix Paeoniae Rubra) 15g, and others as needed. The herbs were given in decoction daily 1 to 2 hours after a meal. Of 60 patients, the study reported recovery in 12 patients, improvement in 46 patients, and no improvement in 2 patients. The overall rate of effectiveness was 96%.⁷
4. **Atrophic gastritis:** Thirty-nine patients with atrophic gastritis reported good results using modified *Chai Hu Shu Gan San*. The herbal formula contained *Chai Hu* (Radix Bupleuri) 12g, *Zhi Qiao* (Fructus Aurantii) 12g, *Xiang Fu* (Rhizoma Cyperi) 12g, *Bai Shao* (Radix Paeoniae Alba) 15g, *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong) 10g, *Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae) 6g, *Yan Hu Suo* (Rhizoma Corydalis) 10g, *Chuan Lian Zi* (Fructus Toosendan) 6g, *Mu Xiang* (Radix Aucklandiae) 6g, *Dan Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Salviae Miltiorrhizae) 15g, *Yu Jin* (Radix Curcumae) 15g, *Ban Xia* (Rhizoma Pinelliae) 10g, *Chen Pi* (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae) 10g, charred *Shan Zha* (Fructus Crataegi) 15g, charred *Shen Qu* (Massa Fermentata) 15g, and charred *Mai Ya* (Fructus Hordei Germinatus) 15g. The study reported complete recovery in 23 of 39 patients.⁸
5. **Peptic ulcer disease:** Use of modified *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* was associated with beneficial effects in treating gastric or duodenal ulcers. The herbal formula was modified from *Chai Hu Shu Gan San*, with the removal of *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong), and the addition of *Bai Ji* (Rhizoma Bletillae), *Sha Ren* (Fructus Amomi), *Xuan Shen* (Radix Scrophulariae), and *Pu Gong Ying* (Herba Taraxaci). The duration of treatment ranged from 3 to 12 packs of herbs.⁹

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6. **Male sexual dysfunction:** Use of modified *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* was effective in treating 17 of 19 patients who were unable to ejaculate. The herbal treatment contained *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* plus *Ju He* (Semen Citri Reticulatae), *Shi Chang Pu* (Rhizoma Acori Tatarinowii), *Chuan Shan Jia* (Squama Manis), *Mu Tong* (Caulis Akebiae), *Hu Po* (Succinum), and others as needed.¹⁰
7. **Orchitis:** One study reported complete recovery in 32 of 37 patients with orchitis, when treated with an herbal formula that contained *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* plus *Huang Qin* (Radix Scutellariae), *Wu Yao* (Radix Linderae), *Tao Ren* (Semen Persicae), *Xiao Hui Xiang* (Fructus Foeniculi), *Ju He* (Semen Citri Reticulatae), *Bai Jiang Cao* (Herba cum Radice Patriniae), and others.¹¹
8. **Breast distention and pain:** Complete relief of breast distention and pain was reported in 21 of 24 patients who were treated with modified *Chai Hu Shu Gan San*. The herbal formula contained *Chai Hu* (Radix Bupleuri) 12g, *Bai Shao* (Radix Paeoniae Alba) 12g, vinegar-fried *Chen Pi* (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae) 10g, *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong) 10g, *Xiang Fu* (Rhizoma Cyperi) 10g, dry-fried *Zhi Qiao* (Fructus Aurantii) 10g, *Yu Jin* (Radix Curcumae) 10g, *Tong Cao* (Medulla Tetrapanacis) 10g, *Bai Zhi* (Radix Angelicae Dahuricae) 10g, processed *Ru Xiang* (Gummi Olibanum) 10g, processed *Mo Yao* (Myrrha) 10g, *Pu Gong Ying* (Herba Taraxaci) 15g, and *Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae) 6g. The treatment protocol was to cook the herbs in water, and administer the decoction in three equally-divided doses daily, for 7 days per course of treatment.¹²
9. **Insomnia:** One study reported 96.7% effectiveness using modified *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* to treat patients with stubborn insomnia. The treatment protocol was to use this formula as the base, with the addition of *Chi Shao* (Radix Paeoniae Rubra) and *Dan Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Salviae Miltiorrhizae) for blood stagnation; *Ju Hua* (Flos Chrysanthemi) and *Zhi Zi* (Fructus Gardeniae) for Liver excess; and *Dan Nan Xing* (Arisaema cum Bile) and *Shi Chang Pu* (Rhizoma Acori Tatarinowii) for phlegm accumulation. Of 30 patients, the study reported complete recovery in 26 patients, improvement in 3 patients, and no effect in one patient.¹³

SUGGESTED ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT

1. Points: *Yangchi* (TH 4), *Neiguan* (PC 6), *Gongsun* (SP 4), *Xingjian* (LR 2), *Housanli* (ST 36), *Sanyinjiao* (SP 6), *Qimen* (LR 14), *Ganshu* (BL 18), *Xiashi* (GB 43), *Zhongting* (CV 16) and *Ganshu* (equine).
2. Technique: sedation.

Yangchi (TH 4) regulates the qi flow of the *shaoyang* and raises yang qi to increase its circulation. *Neiguan* (PC 6) and *Gongsun* (SP 4) are used according to the *ba hui* (eight meeting) points principle to relieve chest congestion and remove stagnation. *Xingjian* (LR 2) regulates Liver qi. *Zusanli* (ST 36) and *Sanyinjiao* (SP 6) tonify qi, strengthen the Spleen, and nourish yin and blood. Lastly, *Qimen* (LR 14), *Ganshu* (BL 18), *Xiashi* (GB 43), and *Zhongting* (CV 16) regulate qi circulation, smooth Liver qi, and relieve pain. *Ganshu* (equine) is a classical equine point that is effective for treating liver qi stagnation. [Note: *Ganshu* (equine) in horses is not the same as *Ganshu* (BL 18) in human, although the pinyin names are the same. *Ganshu* (equine), a classical point also known as *Ganzhishu*, is the Liver *shu* (transport) point in horses. It is located in the 13th intercostals space along a line from the shoulder to the hip joint.]

AUTHORS' COMMENTS

Chai Hu Shu Gan San is the basic formula for treating Liver qi stagnation. Many other formulas that treat Liver qi stagnation are formulated from it, modified to fit the patient's condition. It can be used to help normalize elevated liver enzymes in the absence of other abnormal laboratory values with appropriate clinical signs. It is often used to treat dogs with canine Cushing's disease (hyperadrenocorticism). Liver qi stagnation commonly disrupts the digestion, emotional balance, and qi and blood circulation of these animals. As liver qi stagnation is pervasive throughout all stages of the disease, *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* has evolved as an important formula to help effectively manage hyperadrenocorticism in these cases.

For poor appetite, belching, flatulence, loose stool and abdominal pain due to disharmony between the Stomach and Liver in the dog, add *Shen Ling Bai Zhu San* (Ginseng, Poria, and *Atractylodes Macrocephala* Powder). For poor digestion with irritability, restlessness and hyperactivity, combine with *Gui Pi Tang* (Restore the Spleen Decoction). For acute cholangiohepatitis in the cat, combine with *Yin Chen Hao Tang* (*Artemisia Scoparia* Decoction).

In the horse, Liver qi stagnation is also associated with pain in the girth area and behavioral problems, especially when being ridden and during estrus. If discomfort is the biggest problem, combining the formula with *Shao Fu Zhu Yu Tang* (Drive Out Blood Stasis in the Lower Abdomen Decoction) is helpful. If behavioral issues are more of a concern, combining with *Chai Hu Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang* (Bupleurum plus Dragon Bone and Oyster Shell Decoction) is often very successful.

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Chai Hu Shu Gan San is a variation of *Si Ni San* (Frigid Extremities Powder). Although the herbs in these two formulas are similar, their doses and emphases are different.

- *Si Ni San* treats both Spleen qi deficiency and obstructed circulation of Liver and Gallbladder qi. *Chai Hu* (Radix Bupleuri) and *Zhi Shi* (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) are the only qi-moving herbs in this formula. *Zhi Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle) is used at a high dose to tonify qi and strengthen the Spleen.
- *Chai Hu Shu Gan San* mainly treats Liver qi stagnation, and contains many qi- and blood-moving herbs, such as *Chai Hu* (Radix Bupleuri), *Zhi Qiao* (Fructus Aurantii), *Chen Pi* (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae), *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong), and *Xiang Fu* (Rhizoma Cyperi). *Zhi Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle) is used at a low dose for harmonizing purposes.

References

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Shū Gān Tāng (Spread the Liver Decoction)

疏肝湯

疏肝汤

Pinyin Name: *Shu Gan Tang*

Literal Name: Spread the Liver Decoction

Alternate Name: Bupleurum and Evodia Combination

Original Source: *Wan Bing Hui Chun* (Restoration of Health from the Myriad Diseases) by Gong Ting-Xian in 1587

COMPOSITION

<i>Chai Hu</i> (Radix Bupleuri)	3g
<i>Qing Pi</i> (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae Viride)	3g
<i>Zhi Qiao</i> (Fructus Aurantii)	3g
<i>Tao Ren</i> (Semen Persicae)	3g
<i>Hong Hua</i> (Flos Carthami)	1.5g
<i>Dang Gui</i> (Radix Angelicae Sinensis)	3g
<i>Chuan Xiong</i> (Rhizoma Chuanxiong)	2.1g
<i>Bai Shao</i> (Radix Paeoniae Alba)	2.1g
<i>Huang Lian</i> (Rhizoma Coptidis), <i>chao</i> (dry-fried)	6g

DOSAGE / PREPARATION / ADMINISTRATION

The source text specifies to first dry-fry *Huang Lian* (Rhizoma Coptidis) with the juice of *Wu Zhu Yu* (Fructus

Evodiae). Then, grind all of the ingredients into powder and cook in water to make a decoction. Take the warm, strained decoction after meals.