

Xiǎo Chéng Qì Tāng (Minor Order the Qi Decoction)

小承氣湯 小承气汤

Pinyin Name: *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang*

Literal Name: Minor Order the Qi Decoction

Alternate Names: *Hsiao Cheng Chi Tang*, Minor Qi-Infusing Decoction, Minor Purgative Decoction, Minor Rhubarb Combination

Original Source: *Shang Han Lun* (Discussion of Cold-Induced Disorders) by Zhang Zhong-Jing in the Eastern Han Dynasty

COMPOSITION

<i>Da Huang</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei), <i>xi</i> (washed) with liquor	12g
<i>Hou Po</i> (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis), <i>zhi</i> (fried with liquid)	6g
<i>Zhi Shi</i> (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus), <i>zhi</i> (fried with liquid)	3 large pieces [9g]

DOSAGE / PREPARATION / ADMINISTRATION

Cook the ingredients with 4 cups [800 mL] of water until reduced to 1.2 cups [240 mL]. Take the warm, strained decoction in two equally-divided doses twice daily.

CHINESE THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS

Gently drains heat and accumulation downward

CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

1. Excess *yangming fu* (hollow organs) syndrome: constipation, delirium, tidal fever, fullness and distention of the chest and abdomen, a yellow tongue coating that is old- and dirty-looking in appearance, and a rapid, slippery pulse.
2. Early stage of dysentery with rectal tenesmus, and epigastric and abdominal distention and pain.

CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

Constipation, post-operative constipation, acute simple intestinal obstruction, intestinal paralysis, absence of intestinal peristalsis, abdominal distention and pain, chronic gastritis, acute gastroenteritis, viral hepatitis, acute cholecystitis, acute appendicitis, acute febrile disease, hypertension, obesity, and food intoxication.

EXPLANATION

Xiao Cheng Qi Tang (Minor Order the Qi Decoction) treats *yangming fu* (hollow organs) syndrome of moderate severity, characterized by the presence of *pi* (distention), *man* (fullness), and *shi* (hardness). However, there is no *zao* (dryness). *Da Huang* (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei), the chief herb, clears heat in the Stomach and Intestines and purges constipated stools. *Hou Po* (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis) and *Zhi Shi* (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) regulate qi flow to relieve fullness and distention, and activate qi circulation to help dispel heat and stagnant stools.

Xiao Cheng Qi Tang is a variation of *Da Cheng Qi Tang* (Major Order the Qi Decoction), and basically has the

same purgative effect, except that it is a milder formula for *yangming fu* (hollow organs) syndrome of moderate severity. Therefore, it is not necessary to post-decoct *Da Huang* (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei), as in *Da Cheng Qi Tang* (Major Order the Qi Decoction). Instead, *Da Huang* (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) is fully cooked to moderate its potent downward draining effects. Additionally, the doses of *Hou Po* (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis) and *Zhi Shi* (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) are decreased, since the condition is not as severe. Lastly, *Mang Xiao* (Natrii Sulfas) is not used since there is an absence of *zao* (dryness).

MODIFICATIONS

- If there is generalized weakness and qi deficiency, add *Huang Qi* (Radix Astragali) and *Ren Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng).
- If there is generalized weakness and blood deficiency, add *Dang Gui* (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) and *Chuan Xiong* (Rhizoma Chuanxiong).
- When there is irritability and restlessness as a result of Lung deficiency, add *Mai Dong* (Radix Ophiopogonis) and *Wu Wei Zi* (Fructus Schisandrae Chinensis).
- For tonsillitis, add *Shan Dou Gen* (Radix et Rhizoma Sophorae Tonkinensis) and *Jie Geng* (Radix Platycodonis).

CAUTIONS / CONTRAINDICATIONS

Refer to *Da Cheng Qi Tang* (Major Order the Qi Decoction).

PHARMACOLOGICAL EFFECTS

1. **Gastrointestinal:** Administration of *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* was associated with increased contraction and peristalsis. The mechanism of action was attributed to the stimulating effect on the smooth muscles of the intestines.^{1,2}
2. **Antibiotic:** Administration of *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* was associated with an inhibitory effect *in vitro* against *Staphylococcus aureus* and *E. coli*. Also, the inhibitory effect of the formula was determined to be stronger than the individual ingredients.³

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Diagnosis	Signs and Symptoms	Treatment	Herbs
Accumulation of excess heat in the Stomach and Intestines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constipation with fullness and distention of the chest and abdomen: accumulation of excess heat in the Stomach and Intestines Yellow tongue coating: interior excess heat 	Gently drains heat and accumulation downward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully-cooked <i>Da Huang</i> (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) gently clears heat and purges the constipated stools. <i>Hou Po</i> (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis) activates qi circulation and disperses accumulation. <i>Zhi Shi</i> (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) relieves fullness and distention.

CLINICAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH

- Gastrointestinal disorders:** *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* has been shown in many studies to treat various types of gastrointestinal disorders, such as post-operative constipation, intestinal paralysis, absence of intestinal peristalsis, abdominal distention and pain, etc.⁴
- Post-operative constipation:** Eighty-six geriatric patients were treated with modified *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* for prevention and treatment of post-operative constipation. The first dose of the formula was given 48 hours after the surgery, and the second dose was given 6 hours later (54 hours after the surgery) only if necessary. The study reported 100% success rate, with 53 patients showing gas or bowel movement after the first dose, and the remaining 33 patients after the second dose.⁵
- Chronic gastritis:** Use of modified *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* was associated with 96.36% effectiveness in the treatment of chronic gastritis in 55 patients.⁶
- Acute gastroenteritis:** Modified *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* effectively treated acute gastroenteritis in 91 patients (49 males and 42 females) between 1 and 5 years of age, with 1-3 days history of illness. The study reported immediate improvement in 16 cases, significant improvement in 42 cases, moderate improvement in 26 cases, and no benefit in 7 cases. The overall rate of effectiveness was 92.3%. The herbal treatment used *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* plus charred *Shan Zha* (Fructus Crataegi) and charred *Shen Qu* (Massa Fermentata) as the base formula. *Mu Xiang* (Radix Aucklandiae) was added for abdominal pain; *Lian Qiao* (Fructus Forsythiae), and *Bo He* (Herba Menthae) were added for fever; *Sha Ren* (Fructus Amomi), *Huang Lian* (Rhizoma Coptidis), and *Ban Xia* (Rhizoma Pinelliae) were added for recurrent nausea and vomiting. The herbs were given one time daily in decoction.⁷
- Viral hepatitis:** Administration of modified *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* effectively treated 39 of 40 patients with viral hepatitis. Of those who responded to the treatment, none had recurrence during the follow-up exam one year later. All patients received two courses of treatment, with 15 days

per course. The herbal treatment contained *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* plus *Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae) as the base formula. Additionally, *Cang Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis) was added for dampness; and charred *Shan Zha* (Fructus Crataegi) and charred *Ji Nei Jin* (Endothelium Corneum Gigeriae Galli) were added for indigestion. Pharmaceutical drugs were added as supportive treatment when necessary.⁸

HERB-DRUG INTERACTION

Opioid-induced constipation and nausea: One study reported marked effectiveness using *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* to relieve constipation and nausea caused by excessive use of opioid analgesics in 40 patients with terminal cancer. For constipation, the study reported complete recovery in 30 cases, improvement in 8 cases, and no benefit in 2 cases. For nausea, the study reported complete relief in 19 cases and improvement in 9 cases.⁹

AUTHORS' COMMENTS

Please refer to *Da Cheng Qi Tang* (Major Order the Qi Decoction) for a detailed comparison with *Xiao Cheng Qi Tang* and *Tiao Wei Cheng Qi Tang* (Regulate the Stomach and Order the Qi Decoction).

References

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