

# WELCOME!

## TREATING **ACNE** WITH CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE

with Sabine Schmitz (MMed TCM, China)



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### ABOUT ME

*30 years of combined experience of TCM and various areas of Western medicine!*

*Western Medicine:*

- **Nursing diploma**
- Diploma: **Medical Technical Assistant**
- Licensed **Natural Health Professional**
- Worked in hospitals, laboratories, universities, and national and international clinical research for the pharmaceutical industry.

*TCM:*

- 20 years of experience in TCM, self-employed for more than for 15 years
- Acu diploma, herbal medicine diploma
- **Master studies in China** (M.Med. TCM, China)
- Majoring in Chinese medical dermatology
- **Author** of TCM Dermatology books
- Founder and owner of **CHINAMED COSMETICS**: natural, modern herbal skincare based on the principles of TCM.



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## Published **books**:



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TCM **Skincare** [www.chinamed-cosmetics.com](http://www.chinamed-cosmetics.com)



Explore broader applications of TCM in Dermatology – extending beyond herbal tea, unlocking additional therapeutic potential.

Optimal skincare for your patients, complementing TCM therapy or as a preventive measure. Think about!

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In these challenging times,  
our **medicine** is more **needed** than ever.



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## My treatment *approach:*

- Practical
- Flexible
- Proven

Classical formulas  
with moderate  
dosages, plus  
modifications.



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## For you

- Helpful for your daily practice with skin patients
- Understandable and clear with examples and pictures.

## Practical, modern & simple approach

- Not complicated
- Easy to implement in your daily practice
- Immediately applicable in treating patients.

## Tested and proven effective

- Hands-on experience gained in my TCM practice for dermatology
- More than theoretical textbook knowledge.

## Advantages

- Independent work with formulas and modifications
- Moderate dosages and affordable for patients.



What requirements should you ideally fulfill?

- Being familiar with TCM foundations
- Being familiar with tongue and pulse diagnosis
- Basic education in Chinese herbal medicine.
- Patience
- Willingness to think and treat in a different way
- Advocating one's own standpoint in a clear way.

Most of our patients have seen many Western Dermatologists before and they have taken many chemical drugs.

Never forget that!



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## Acne (Acne vulgaris)

Acne is one of the most common disorders treated by dermatologists, but also in TCM practices.

**Today's course: Acne in adults,**  
as these are the patients I mainly see  
in my practice.

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## Definition Acne vulgaris

Inflammatory disease of the sebaceous glands and hair follicles.

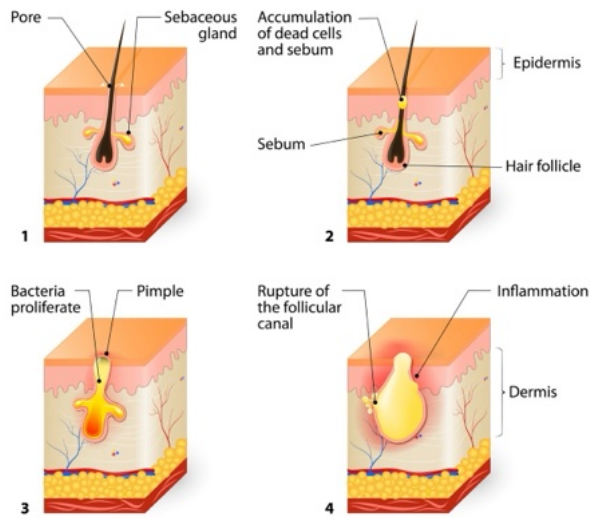
### How does it develop?

- By increased sebum production and an increased buildup of dead skin cells in the pores
- Formation of blackheads (comedones)
- Bacterial infections inflame the blackheads and pustules, and pimples develop.

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## ACNE FORMATION



## Pathogenesis



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## Localization



- Primarily on **exposed areas**: Face, back, chest, and neck and shoulders
- These regions have **larger amount of pores** than the rest of the body
- Thus more **plugging** and, consequently, **inflammations**.

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# Localization

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# Localization

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# Localization



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# Main reasons and risks for acne



1. (Over) production of sebum (**seborrhea**)
2. Dead skin cells (**hyperkeratosis**)
3. Clogged **pores**
4. Bacteria (**propionibacteria**)
5. External influences like **sun, dirt, high humidity and sweating**; but also **hormones**, family history, **medication** but also **stress**.

KOOL Pictures & Images

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# Propionibacterium acnes



- A special **pH value** of the skin is important for an intact skin barrier
- Slightly **acidic range of pH 4.8-5.5** (protective acid mantle).
- Alkaline pH (8-9) favors the development of pathogenic microflora
- *P. acnes* can multiply well and inflammation develops.

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## **P. acnes with Wood lamp (black light lamp)**

Bacterial pathogens such as *P. acnes* cause fluorescence.  
This is then seen in blue-violet light.



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## Most common types of ACNE

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**Acne vulgaris** means nothing else than "common acne".

Clinically, different forms of acne can be distinguished.

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## Acne comedonica (mild Acne vulgaris)

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- Mainly blackheads (comedones) and only isolated inflammatory symptoms
- Often effectively treatable with proper skin care
- However, in a bad case it can also mean the beginning of a more severe manifestation.

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## Acne papulosa

- Moderately severe form
- Blackheads become inflamed
- Papules and inflammations
- Usually sensitive and painful.

Papule: an inflamed nodule up to the size of a pea with no contents, very difficult to squeeze.

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## Acne pustulosa

- Severe inflammatory form.
- Inflammatory pustules (purulent blisters) and cysts.
- Very painful when touched.
- Often scars remain due to inflammatory processes.

### **Acne papulopustulosa:**

*Mixed form of acne papulosa and pustulosa.*

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## Acne nodosa



- Severe form
- Hard nodules under the skin up to 1 cm in size, also confluent
- Painful when touched
- With or without inflammation and pus.

KNOX / PHOTOFEST

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## Acne nodulocystica



- Also a severe form
- Highly inflammatory and painful nodules and cysts under the skin
- Deep painful abscesses may occur
- Painful when touched
- Scarring.

*Abscess (purulent boil) is an encapsulated collection of pus under the skin.*

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## Acne cystica

- One of the most severe forms of acne, very difficult to treat
- Especially on the face, very deep
- Highly inflammatory and painful, large cysts under the skin
- Swelling, redness
- Cysts may form abscess
- Scarring.

KOZ Cosmetics GmbH

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## Special forms of acne

### Acne inversa:

- Chronic, severe course
- In skin folds, such as armpits, in the groin, genital and anal areas
- Abscesses, nodules, fistulas, much pus, very painful and scarring.

### Acne conglobata:

- Very rare
- Most severe form!

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## Do not confuse with Acne vulgaris



### Acne rosacea (also copper rose):

- Primarily adults, cause unknown
- Chronic, severe course
- Redness, visibility of small blood vessels (spider veins)
- Small pimples appearing on cheeks & nose, sometimes on the chin
- In severe cases: pustules, complete face reddened, hot and very painful, thickening of nose (Rhinophyma = bulbous nose).

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## Acne rosacea course Summer 2024!



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## WEST MED Therapy

### *Topical*

- **Benzoyl peroxide** (BPO) as gel, lotion or wash
- **Antibiotics**
- Chemical **peelings** with retinol (Vitamin A) etc.

### *Most common side effects*

Skin irritation, dry and sensitive skin, poor skin healing.

Particularly with benzoyl peroxide and acid treatment:  
skin irritations such as redness, itching, tightness and  
burning, but even skin peeling.



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# WEST MED Therapy

## **Oral**

**Hormonal preparations** (anti-androgens)

**Antibiotics:** in severe cases.

Often not helpful as it does not treat cause.

## **Most common side effects**

**Pill:** headaches, mood swings, intermittent bleeding, breast tenderness or nausea, also reduced libido.

**Antibiotics:** can affect the balance of intestinal flora, e.g. diarrhea, abdominal pain and nausea. Fungal infections.



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## TCM HISTORY

Acne in TCM History  
Naming the condition  
Face mapping

## AETIOLOGY

Internal causes according to TCM  
External causes according to TCM  
Other causes

## TCM SYNDROME DIFFERENTIATION

Detailed information on diagnosing the skin, pulse and tongue condition

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# TCM HISTORY: Naming the condition

TCM today refers to Acne as **fèi fēng fěnn cì**.

- also "Lung wind acne"
- "Lung wind lesion"
- "Lung wind white thorns"
- or "**fěnn cì**" for short (acne).

TCM: Skin closely related to the **Lungs**.

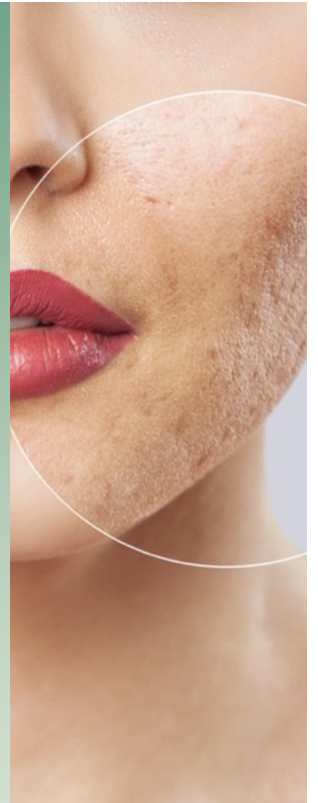
*Healthy function/condition:*

Skin is well nourished and hydrated. Skin is healthy, looks radiant.

*Disturbed function/condition:*

Skin is malnourished and dehydrated.

Dryness, flaky skin sallow complexion.



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# TCM HISTORY: Literature review

Research and experience in derma and acne for over 2000 years

**Huáng Dì Nèi Jīng:**

- **Earliest reference to the term** „cuó 瘰“
- Pathogenesis: wind (**fēng** 风) attacks the body after sweating, and Lung - qì (**fèi qì** 肺气) is blocked inside.

compiled  
ca. 206 B.C.–220 A.D.

**Shén Nóng Běn Cǎo Jīng Jí Zhù:**

- Earliest recorded TCM medical book on the **treatment of acne**, two herbs **zǐ cǎo** & **shān zhū yú**

Táo Hóng-Jīng  
(456-536)

**Shòu Shì Bǎo Yuán:**

- **Heat in the lungs** as a cause of acne.

Gōng Tíng-Xián  
(1368-1644)

**Gǔ Jīn Yī Tǒng Dà Quán:**

- Name of acne "**fēng cì**" 风刺.

Xú Chūn-Fū  
(1368-1644)

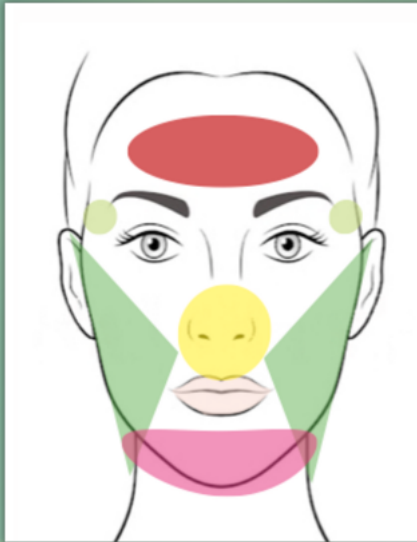


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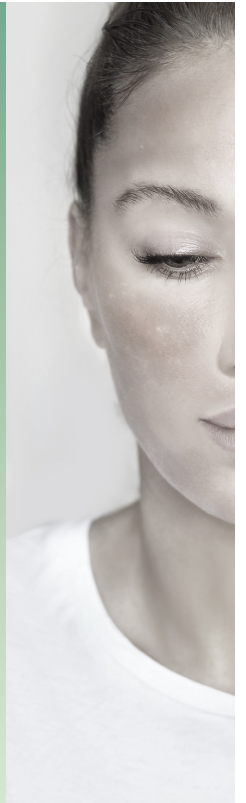
# FACE MAPPING

There are many theories. Here is mine:



|             |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| Red         | Heart, Lungs     |
| Light Green | Gallbladder      |
| Green       | Liver            |
| Yellow      | Spleen & Stomach |
| Pink        | Hormones         |

- *Forehead*: linked to the **Heart**, the **Lungs** and respiratory system.
- The corners of the forehead, the *temples*, are associated with the **Gallbladder**.
- Breakouts on the *cheeks* indicate a problem with the **Liver**.
- The region *around the nose* relates to the digestive system (**Spleen & Stomach**).
- Acne around the *chin and lower jaw* is linked to **hormonal** disturbances.



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## Internal Causes

### 1. Psycho-emotional factors

*The skin is the mirror to the soul!*

**Emotions are internal factors = endogenous causes.**

**7 EMOTIONS:** Anger (rage, frustration: *Liver*), joy (*Heart*), worry (*Spleen*), melancholy and sadness (*Lung*), fear (shock, trauma: *Kidney*).

*Note: Emotions are normal!  
Only an excess causes illness.*



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# Internal Causes

## EMOTIONS and Acne

Common patterns I see in my practice:

- **Li-qi stagnation:** most common pattern in modern times
- **Blood stasis:** late result from fire, which can cause blood stagnation
- **Dampness & phlegm:** extreme worry, over-thinking and over-work slow down the transformation and transport function of the Spleen, resulting in dampness and phlegm blocking the skin.



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# External Causes

## 2. Negative Influence of Environmental Factors

In general: **Weather/climatic factors**

**Hot and humid climate:** increases oil production and thus, pores clog

**Winter and coldness:** skin becomes very dry due to external wind and cold (plus heating air from indoors)

**Pollution:** chemicals and gases put stress on the skin  
> no protection against bacteria that can cause acne.



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# External Causes

## 2. TCM: External pathogenic factors

### 6 climatic (exogenous) factors in TCM:

*Wind, cold, summer heat, dampness, dryness, heat/fire.*

When pathogenic?

Weakened immune system, unusual or non-seasonal weather patterns.

Other factors:

Insects, parasites, toxins (medicine, food, chemicals).



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# Other External Causes

## 3. Poor Diet and Lifestyle Habits

Unhealthy diet, overeating and careless eating

Lifestyle with an excess of disease-promoting factors

- tobacco and alcohol abuse
- little sleep
- work overload
- lack of exercise

Lack of health promoting factors

- healthy diet
- adequate sleep
- work-life balance
- physical activity.



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# Other External Causes

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## Make-up and sun

- Make-up
- Cosmetics
- Pore clogging oils.
- Prolonged exposure to sunlight
- Heavy and greasy sunscreen
- Increased sweat production in warm and hot weather.



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# TCM SYNDROME DIFFERENTIATION

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Hands-on Process for **ACNE** -  
Step by Step.

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## TCM syndrome differentiation (*biàn zhèng*):

detailed analysis of all clinical information by the **four main diagnostic TCM methods**:

- **Inspection**  
(observation)
- **Auscultation**  
(listening)
- **Palpation**  
(feeling)
- **Olfaction**  
(smelling)

## INSPECTION (OBSERVATION)

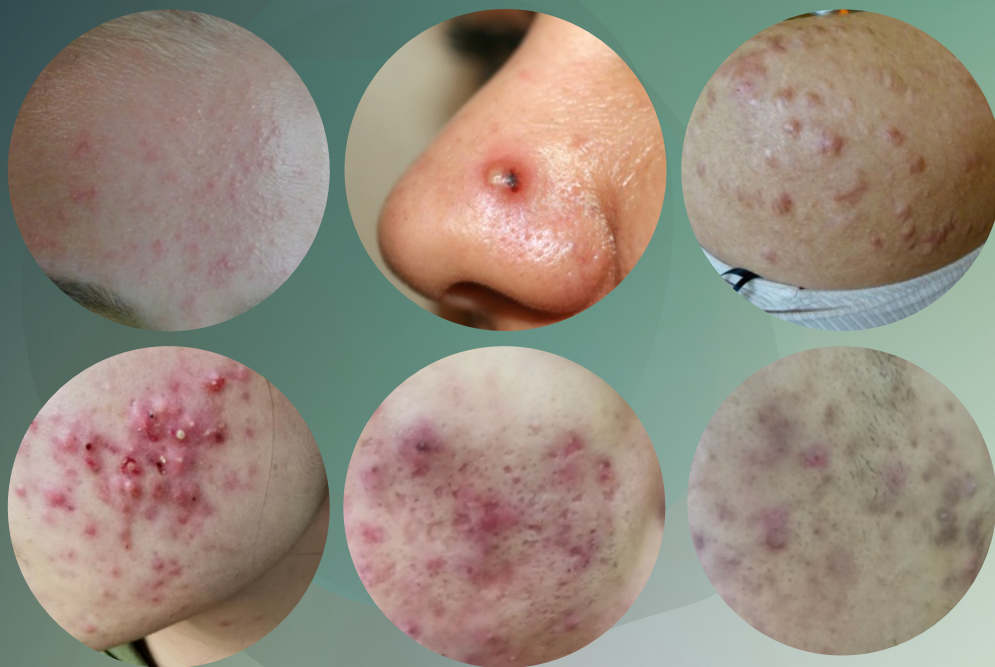
**When treating a skin disease, always place the focus on the skin first! We treat what we see!**

- When the pt. comes in: patient's complexion & posture.
- Our main focus is on the **appearance & localization of the skin lesion**:
  - > Warmth/heat sensation, tightness, burning, inflammation or pus and discharge.
  - > Nodes or cysts.
  - > Location: where? *Reminder: Face mapping.*
- And of course, **tongue diagnosis**.

Make sure to use daylight while inspecting the skin, as there are color nuances on the skin that are difficult to see in less optimal lighting conditions.



## Example pictures of the skin:

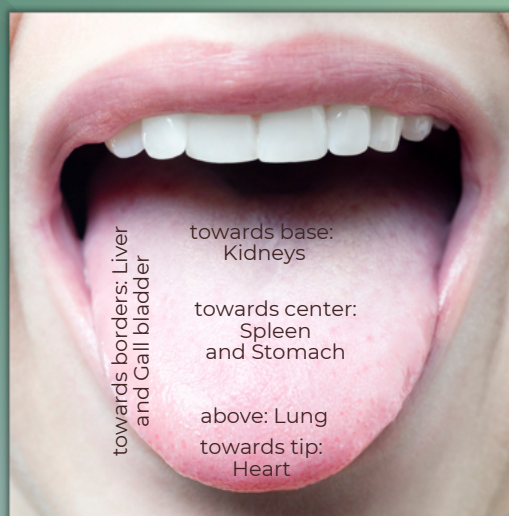


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## Tongue: A brief repetition



- Normal size.
- Not thick.
- Light red (pink, vital) coloration.
- Thin white, moist coating.



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What we usually see in practice:



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## AUSCULTATION (LISTENING)

- Patient's voice
- Patient's report – symptoms and history.

More data is gathered through **questioning** the patient:

- Onset/trigger and duration
- Accompanying symptoms: eg. pain, warmth/heat sensation, any sensations of burning, itching, or heat on the lesion.
- Don't forget to ask about the aggravating or alleviating factors.

**My list of key factors for making ACNE worse:**  
*stress, alcohol, poor diet with hot, spicy, oily foods,  
too much sweets and too much dairy products!*



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## Further crucial factors (keep the big picture in mind):

- **Emotions**
- **Sleep**
- **Digestion**
- **Diet**
- **Lifestyle** (possibly stress, overwork, night shifts)
- **Environment** (climate, or living location)
- **Menstrual cycle** with female patients.
- Add on: Never forget to ask about additional **medication**.
- Previous antibiotics administration not uncommon – damage the Spleen for instance; or cortisone: brings internal heat.
- Previous cold, fever, etc. - Onset factors.



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## OLFACTION (SMELLING)

- Body odour
- Smelly breath.

*This usually goes unnoticed! You really don't have to ask...*

Examples:

- Foul breath can be due to heat in the stomach, indigestion, caries, or an unclean mouth
- Sour breath can indicate food accumulation in the stomach
- The offensive smell of sweat, usually indicates heat syndromes
- Or just too much perfume: phlegm!



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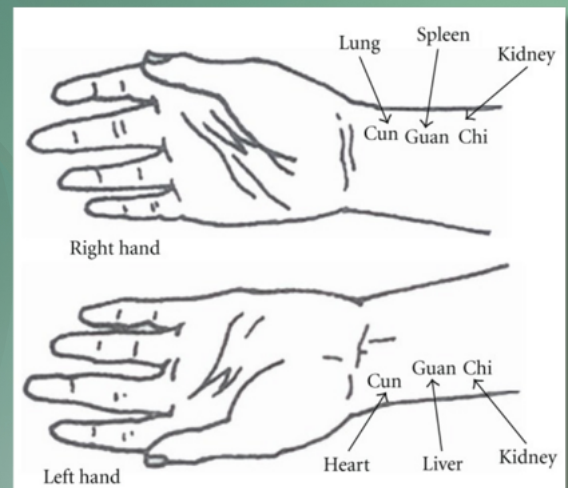
## PALPATION (FEELING)

- Consistency and mobility of the **lesion**
- Skin: **Pain** on touch?

- **Pulse diagnosis according to TCM:**

*We check the frequency, depth, strength and rhythm of the pulse.*

- CUN: Information on the area above the diaphragm.
- GUAN: Area between diaphragm and navel.
- CHI: Below the navel.



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## CAVE: What might falsify pulse?

- **Medication**

*Antibiotics: cold, dampness > slow, slippery*

*Cortisone: heat > rapid*

*Beta blockers: cold > slow.*

- **Nervousness** and tension, **coffee**: heat > fast
- **Main meal** or during **pregnancy**: slippery
- Very rare: **dislocation** = atypical course.

*Whenever you feel an irregular pulse, please advise your patient to consult their general practitioner or cardiologist. It would be careless to not refer out for issues beyond our scope of practice.*



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Gathered all info & identified  
TCM syndrome.



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**WE TREAT WHAT WE SEE !**

The TCM pattern, and not the name of the skin disease.  
This is what makes TCM individual, flexible and effective!

And now?  
How to proceed

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**ALMOST ALWAYS WITH HERBS**  
- Internally & Externally -

**Different phases // Different formulas!**

Diet and skin care advice.  
Acupuncture is a can, not a must.





## Fresh herbs

*Raw drugs as decoction: jiān jì  
I would NEVER deviate from this!*

- Most effective form of treatment
- Internal and external use
- Indispensable for chronic and complex skin diseases
- Fast and effective
- For patients: easy to prepare and drink.

We are the specialists.  
Patients seek our advice.  
Usually they have tried a lot before.

**No discussion: Herbs are the answer.**

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## Preparation & ingestion:

- Dosages: for decoctions, per bag
- Granules: calculate the grams per bag.  
At least 12 g per day, divided into two dosages.
- Ingestion: usually lukewarm.
- Frequency: 2-3 times/day.
- 100-150 ml per dose.
- Time gap (30 min) before meals (or after)!

Decoctions are not a highlight in taste.  
However, the tea's purpose is to work,  
not taste.

Patients can drink a sip of tea  
or juice or eat a small cookie afterwards.

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## A short word on **raw herbs**!

*Chapter 77 Discourse on Expounding the Five Faults  
(success and failure in treatment)*

Wang Bing's comment:

**"If the physician's outer appearance is soft and weak,  
the patient will not believe his words."**



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## External application: Options

Important: WET TO WET, DRY TO DRY!

- For ACNE usually: **wet compresses**.
- Cold compresses very good against inflammations and pus.
- **Ointments** and **creams**, when the skin is closed!
- Examples are provided for each pattern.

Aggressive methods hurt the skin more than doing any good.



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# Analogies in TCM

## Wind:

Rapid onset,  
*mainly on the upper  
parts of the body:*  
face & forehead, not  
deep (superficial),  
red, warm,  
inflammatory,  
painful, itchy

## Heat > fire:

Severe, intense!  
*Any part of the body,  
but usually upper  
part.* Red, violet,  
warm/hot,  
thick/swollen,  
burning, pain,  
bleeding,  
pus.

## Summer heat:

**(damp & heat)**  
Sudden onset! Red,  
warm, thick and  
swollen, very inflamed  
and painful; papules,  
pustules,  
erythema.

## Dampness:

Slow onset,  
sluggish, recurrent,  
mainly nodules.  
color relatively  
normal, no obvious  
inflammation.

## Cold:

Color usually pale,  
blue, purple.  
Lesions often not  
elastic, hard,  
Localization is  
limited. *Acne: not  
common.*

## Dryness:

Chronic, not acute.  
Dry skin, hair,  
nails, mucous  
membranes.  
Itching and  
scaling.  
*Acne:  
not common.*

Each TCM syndrome has usually one predominant feature.

In ACNE most important acc. to my clinical experience:

**wind combined with heat, dampness with or without with heat, heat and fire!**

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# Analogies // Colors in TCM



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Example pictures: Acne



wind-heat



damp-heat



Example pictures: Acne



heat



fire



damp  
usually in  
combi with  
other factors



# TCM Syndromes

|                                                 |           |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Wind – Heat Stagnating in the Lungs</b>      | <b>01</b> |
| Dampness – Heat in the Stomach                  | <b>02</b> |
| Blood Stasis                                    | <b>03</b> |
| Knotting Together of Phlegm<br>and Blood Stasis | <b>04</b> |
| Heat Stagnation in the Liver Meridian           | <b>05</b> |

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## ACNE Practical procedure: step by step.

1. Overall impression (start, patient comes in)
2. Skin check
3. Accompanying symptoms
4. Tongue
5. Pulse
6. Making the TCM diagnosis, explaining to the patient
7. Information for the patient on *diet, skin care and how to prepare the herbs*
8. Writing our TCM script.

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# 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs: *Fēng Rè Fàn Fèi Zhèng*

*Feng* - wind, *Re* - heat, *Fan* - attack, stagnation,  
*Fei* - Lung, *Zheng* - pattern

Wind-heat enters the Lung channel from outside, stagnates in the skin and thus disturbs the normal flow of qì and blood.

Typical after cold/flu > onset or worsening of skin.

**Caution:** ask for sore throat.

## Skin:

- Rapid onset and often subsides quickly
- Skin lesions mainly on face (cheeks and forehead)
- Papules & pustules
- Pimples small rather than large, not deep (**superficial**)
- **Fresh red**, warm, inflammatory, painful, itchy.



# 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs: *Fēng Rè Fàn Fèi Zhèng*

## Other key symptoms:

- Constipation, dark yellow urine
- Dry mouth, thirst
- Restlessness and redness/warmth of face
- Previous flu or cold: then possibly cough, shortness of breath, feeling of warmth and sweating

## Tongue:

- Red (esp. at the tip), thin white or yellow coating
- Possibly: red prickles on tip.

## Pulse:

- Rapid and superficial, or
- Rapid and slippery - depending on whether there is phlegm in the Lungs.

## 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs



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## 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs



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## 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs



thin, yellow coating  
red, especially at the tip.



red tongue with yellow coating.  
pt. with previous cold



thin, white coating.  
red dots at tip

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## 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs:

*Fēng Rè Fàn Fèi Zhèng*

Therapeutic Principle:

**Clear heat in the Lungs and expel wind.**

Formula:

***Pí Pá Qīng Fèi Yīn*** (with modifications )

(Eriobotrya Decoction to Clear the Lung)

*Yín Qiào Sǎn* is an option, but stronger and more targeted approach needed to remove wind heat from the Lungs.

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## 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs:

*Fēng Rè Fàn Fèi Zhèng*

***Pí Pá Qīng Fèi Yīn***

*pí pá yè* (Eriobotryae japonicae, Folium) 12-15 g

*sāng bái pí* (Mori, Cortex) 9-12 g

*huáng bǎi* (Phellodendri, Cortex) 9-10 g

*huáng lián* (Coptidis, Rhizoma) 3-6 g

*rén shēn* (Ginseng, Radix) 1-3 g

*gān cǎo* (Glycyrrhizae Uralensis, Radix) 3-6 g

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## 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs:

*Fēng Rè Fàn Fèi Zhèng*

*Pí Pá Qīng Fèi Yīn* > usually not sufficient by itself.

### Modifications:

- Forehead: + *yě jú huā* 9-12 g
- Pustules with pus: + *zǎo xiū* 6-9 g. Great herb to make skin heal!
- Large pustules with pain: + *pú gōng yīng* 15-20 g, *jīn yín huā* 10-15 g and *zǐ huā dì dīng* 9-12 g > (*Wǔ Wèi Xiǎo Dú Yīn*), + *lián qiáo* 9-12 g
- Opening pimples: + *zào jiǎo cì* 6-9 g to clear sebum or pus from pimples
- Dark red, livid, hard and painful lumps: *mǔ dān pí* or *dān shēn* 10-15 g
- Constipation: + (*zhì*) *dà huáng* 9 g, steamed - makes it less harsh, better for weak patients.

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## 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs:

*Fēng Rè Fàn Fèi Zhèng*

***Yín Qiào Sǎn*** as alternative

(Honeysuckle and Forsythia Powder)

*jīn yín huā* (Lonicerae Japonicae, Flos) 15-30 g  
*lián qiáo* (Forsythiae, Fructus) 9-12 g  
*niú bàng zǐ* (Arctii Lappae, Fructus) 9 g  
*dàn dòu chǐ* (Sojae Praeparata, Semen) 3-6 g  
*bò hé* (Menthae, Herba) 3 g  
*jié gěng* (Platycodi, Radix) 3-6 g  
*jīng jiè* (Schizonepetae, Herba) 6-9g  
*dàn zhú yè* (Lophatheri, Herba) 3-6 g  
*lú gēn* (Phragmitis, Rhizoma) 15-30 g  
*gān cǎo* (Glycyrrhizae Uralensis, Radix) 6 g

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# 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs: *Fēng Rè Fàn Fèi Zhèng*

**Two suggestions for external use:** many possibilities, simple, effective!

## 1. *Sān Huáng Xǐ Jì* (3 Yellow Cleanser)

*dà huáng, huáng bǎi, huáng qín, kǔ shēn* 10 g each  
>> For open pustules + *pú gōng yīng* 10 g.

## 2. Individual combination:

*jīn yín huā, pú gōng yīng, lián qiáo,*  
+/- *yě jú huā* each 10-15 g.



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# Diet

- **Never send skin patients home without advice on diet. It's essential.**
- Basic for acne to avoid these three foods:  
*cow's milk, wheat, sugar*
- With inflammation: Avoid hot, spicy, oily food
- With Spleen weakness: cook, steam foods to support/help the Spleen.

A suitable diet will improve the skin,  
and bad nutrition will worsen it.



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## A short word on **fā wù** !

*Fā* - to emit, *wù* - a material or substance.

- tends to be hot
- stimulating

To be avoided:

- Seafood (crabs, shrimp, lobster)
- Meat, like lamb
- Smoking, alcohol
- Hot spices
- Stir fried food
- Fatty, sweet and greasy food.



## 1. Wind-Heat Stagnating in the Lungs: *Fēng Rè Fàn Fèi Zhèng*

### Diet advice:

*AVOID spicy (pungent) tasting foods and foods that have a very warm or hot nature*

- Scallions, chillies, garlic, coffee, wine etc.
- Use ginger with care - do not overuse because it's warming
- Dairy, sugars/sweets and fried foods.

### *Have instead*

- Peppermint and or Chrysanthemum tea
- More vegetables and fresh fruits.

