

Chapter 18 Emetic herbs

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Introduction

- Emetic herbs are herbs that **induce vomiting**. Usually administered in tincture or as teas (infusions or decoctions).
- Most herbs are bitter and sour flavor.
- Emetic herbs induce vomiting and thus quickly empty the stomach of its contents. This may be a necessary treatment if one is feeling sick from **eating too much food** or a poor combination of foods. It is also recommended for treating **poisoning by noncaustic substances** that will not burn the esophagus when vomiting is induced.
- Some people tend to **create excess mucus** as a result of certain foods they eat. The first line of treatment is to empty the stomach, where the mucus originates. Similarly, emetics can be used to **treat colds that have resulted from overeating**.
- Emesis greatly **reduces the energy of the body** and **so should not be used by persons who are already very weak**. The emetic treatment may be followed by a mild stimulating treatment, along with soothing, demulcent herbs, to recover the energy.

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- Emetic herbs

- 常山 Chang Shan Radix Dichroae Febrifugae
- 瓜蒂 Gua Di Pedicellus Cucumeris
- 胆矾 Dan Fan Chalcanthitum
- 藜芦 Li Lu Radix et Rhizoma Veratri

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Study Objective

- 1. Understand the general information on Emetic herbs.
 - a. Concept, common function and indication.
 - b. Characters.
 - c. Compatibility.
 - d. Caution and contraindications
- 2. Get acquainted with the following individual information on herbs in this category.
 - a. Pinyin name, common English name and pharmaceutical name.
 - b. Characters.
 - c. Functions and indications.
 - d. Dosage and administration.
 - e. Cautions and contraindication.

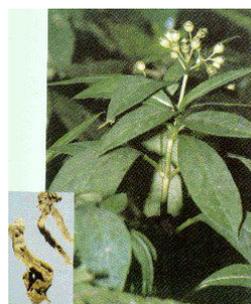
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Chang Shan (常山)
(Radix Dichroae Febrifugae)

- **English name:** dichroa root
- **Literal English translation:** “constant mountain”
- **Alternate name:** 鸡骨常山(ji gu chang shan)
- **Latin name:** Dichroa febrifuga Lour.
- **Pharmaceutical name:** Radix Dichroae Febrifugae
- **Where grown:** Sichuan, Guizhou, Hunan, Hubei
- **When harvested:** autumn
- **Used part:** root
- **Flavor and properties:** bitter, acrid, cold, toxic
- **Channel entered:** Heart, liver, lung

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Chang Shan (常山)
(Radix Dichroae Febrifugae)



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Chang Shan (常山)
(Radix Dichroae Febrifugae)

- **Functions**

- 1. Induce vomiting to expel phlegm.
- 2. Check malaria.

- **Indications**

- 1. For **phlegm in the chest**.
- 2. For **malaria**.

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Chang Shan (常山)
(Radix Dichroae Febrifugae)

- **Dosage and administration**

- 5-10g for decoction.
- The emetic effect of the herb is due to stimulation of the vagal afferents in the gastrointestinal stimulation.
- Generally **fried in wine** to reduce its side effects, except when used as an emetic.
- **Sheng Jiang** is also added to overcome its nausea-inducing properties.

- **Cautions and contraindications**

- Chang Shan can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Chang Shan (常山)
(Radix Dichroae Febrifugae)

• **Modern Study**

- 1. Antimalarial effect: treat malaria
- 2. Anti-amebic effect
- 3. Effect on temperature regulation: antipyretic effect
- 4. Pharmacokinetics: easily absorbed after oral administration in rats. After intravenous administration the active ingredients move into the tissues very quickly, concentrating in the kidneys, and also in the liver, heart, muscles, adipose tissue, and spleen.

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Gua Di (瓜蒂)
(Pedicellus Cucumeris)

- **English name:** melon pedicle
- **Literal English translation:** “melon stalk”
- **Alternate name:** 甜瓜蒂(tian gua di), 香瓜蒂(xiang gua di), 苦丁香(ku ding xiang)
- **Latin name:** Cucumis melo L.
- **Pharmaceutical name:** Pedicellus Cucumeris
- **Where grown:** throughout China, primarily in coastal areas
- **When harvested:** summer (from plants that are not completely ripe)
- **Used part:** pedicle
- **Flavor and properties:** bitter, cold, slightly toxic
- **Channel entered:** Stomach

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Gua Di (瓜蒂)
(Pedicellus Cucumeris)



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Gua Di (瓜蒂)
(Pedicellus Cucumeris)

- **Functions**
 - 1. Induce vomiting.
 - 2. Dispel damp-heat.
- **Indications**
 - 1. For **phlegm heat, retained food.**
 - 2. For **jaundice.**

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Gua Di (瓜蒂) (Pedicellus Cucumeris)

- **Dosage and administration**
 - 2.5-5g in decoction;
 - 0.3-1g in pills and powders.
- **Cautions and contraindications**
 - 1. Contraindicated for patients who are debilitated or have recently lost blood, or in the absence of excess above.
 - 2. If the use of this herb leads to continuous vomiting, 0.1-0.15g of She Xiang acts as an antidote.
 - 3. Contraindicated for weak patients or for those with heart diseases.
- **Modern study**
 - 1. Emetic effect
 - 2. Effect on the liver: protective effect on the liver
 - 3. Effects on cellular immunity: increase the white blood cell count with chronic persistent hepatitis.

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Dan Fan (胆矾) (Chalcanthitum)

- **English name:** Chalcanthite; Sulphate, Copper
- **Botanical name:** Chalcanthitum
- **Used part:** Chalcanthite
- **Flavor and properties:** Sour, astringent, acrid, toxic
- **Channel entered:** Liver, lung, stomach

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Dan Fan (胆矾) (Chalcanthitum)



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Dan Fan (胆矾) (Chalcanthitum)

- **Functions**

- 1. Induce vomiting.
- 2. Resolve toxicity and clear dampness.

- **Indications**

- 1. For **epilepsy, seizures, ingestion of poisons.**
- 2. For **red eyes, mouth sore, swollen gum.**

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Dan Fan (胆矾)
(Chalcanthitum)

- **Dosage and administration**
 - 0.3-0.6g taken in pill and powder form.
- **Cautions and contraindications**
 - Contraindicated in cases of **weak patients**.

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Li Lu (藜芦)
(Radix et Rhizoma Veratri)

- **English name:** veratrum root and rhizome
- **Alternate name:** 山葱 (shan cong)
- **Botanical name:** Veratrum nigrum L. V. maackii Reg., V. schindleri Loes. F. V. grandiflorum (Maxim.), or V. pubdrulum Loes. F. The first is most commonly used.
- **Pharmaceutical name:** Radix et Rhizoma Veratri
- **Where grown:** throughout China, especially Hebei, Henan, Liaoning, Shandong, Shanxi
- **When harvested:** early summer
- **Used part:** root and rhizome
- **Flavor and properties:** Cold, acrid, bitter, toxic
- **Channel entered:** Liver, lungs, stomach

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Li Lu (藜芦) (Radix et Rhizoma Veratri)



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Li Lu (藜芦) (Radix et Rhizoma Veratri)

- **Functions**
 - 1. Induce vomiting.
 - 2. Kill parasites & stop itching.
- **Indications**
 - 1. For **seizures, ingestion of poisons.**
 - 2. For **scabies, lice, ringworm.**

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Li Lu (藜芦)
(Radix et Rhizoma Veratri)

- **Dosage and administration**
 - 0.3-0.9g in pills or powders.
- **Cautions and contraindications**
 - Contraindicated for the debilitated, those who have recently lost blood, and during pregnancy.
 - Contraindicated with Ren Shen, Dan Shen, Dang Shen, Sha Shen, Ku Shen, Xi Xin, and Shao Yao.
- **Modern study**
 - 1. Effects on the gastrointestinal system: strong stimulatory effect on the gastric mucosa, which leads to vomiting and diarrhea.
 - 2. Effects on the cardiovascular system: reduce the heart rate and lower blood pressure.

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- **Emetic herbs**
 - 常山 Chang Shan Radix Dichroae Febrifugae
 - 瓜蒂 Gua Di Pedicellus Cucumeris
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 - 藜芦 Li Lu Radix et Rhizoma Veratri

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Practice questions

- 1. Which of the following herb can NOT induce vomiting
 - A. Chang Shan
 - B. Gua Di
 - C. Li Lu
 - D. Sheng Jiang

- 2. Which of the following herb can not be used with Ren Shen?
 - A. Chang Shan
 - B. Gua Di
 - C. Li Lu
 - D. Sheng Jiang