

## **What is Chinese Herbal Medicine?**

Chinese Herbal Medicine is one of the great herbal systems of the world, with an unbroken tradition going back to the 3rd century BC.

Yet throughout its history it has continually developed in response to changing clinical conditions, and has been sustained by research into every aspect of its use. This process continues today with the development of modern medical diagnostic techniques and knowledge.

Because of its systematic approach and clinical effectiveness it has for centuries had a very great influence on the theory and practice of medicine in the East, and more recently has grown rapidly in popularity in the West. It still forms a major part of healthcare provision in China, and is provided in state hospitals alongside western medicine. Chinese medicine includes all oriental traditions emerging from Southeast Asia that have their origins in China.

Practitioners may work within a tradition that comes from Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan or Korea. It is a complete medical system that is capable of treating a very wide range of conditions.

It includes herbal therapy, acupuncture, dietary therapy, and exercises in breathing and movement (tai chi and qi gong). Some or several of these may be employed in the course of treatment.

Chinese Herbal Medicine, along with the other components of Chinese medicine, is based on the concepts of Yin and Yang. It aims to understand and treat the many ways in which the fundamental balance and harmony between the two may be undermined and the ways in which a person's Qi or vitality may be depleted or blocked. Clinical strategies are based upon diagnosis of patterns of signs and symptoms that reflect an imbalance.

However, the tradition as a whole places great emphasis on lifestyle management in order to prevent disease before it occurs. Chinese medicine recognises that health is more than just the absence of disease and it has a unique capacity to maintain and enhance our capacity for well being and happiness.

**Extracted from ANTA (Australian Natural Therapist Association)**