



KATIE BRINDLE

Athlete's Foot Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



Overview

Athlete's foot, medically known as tinea pedis, is a common fungal infection that affects the feet and toes, characterised by itching, scaling and redness. In Western medicine, it is attributed to fungal growth in moist environments, often aggravated by tight footwear and poor hygiene. Chinese Medicine, however, views Athlete's Foot as a manifestation of Damp-Heat, often accompanied by Wind due to external pathogenic factors. The focus is on clearing the Damp-Heat, nourishing the skin and restoring balance to the affected meridians.

Causes

- Damp-Heat Accumulation: Warm, moist environments contribute to the proliferation of Damp-Heat, leading to fungal growth. This condition is often exacerbated by a diet rich in sugary or greasy foods.
- Liver and Spleen Disharmony: The Liver's role in maintaining smooth Qi flow and the Spleen's function in transforming and transporting fluids are crucial. Imbalances here can lead to the accumulation of Dampness and Heat, providing a fertile environment for fungal growth.
- External Pathogenic Factors: Exposure to Wind and further Dampness, often due to environmental factors, can exacerbate the condition.

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Organs Implicated



- Spleen: Responsible for transforming and transporting body fluids, a weakened Spleen Qi can lead to inefficient handling of body fluids, exacerbating damp conditions and creating a favourable environment for fungal infections.
- Liver: Central to fluid metabolism; Liver Qi stagnation can result in poor fluid metabolism, contributing to the Damp-Heat condition. Stress and anger can aggravate these imbalances, worsening symptoms.
- Kidneys: Key in fluid balance and filtering toxins, if the Kidneys are imbalanced this may increase susceptibility to fungal infections.

Emotions

Chronic emotional stress can severely disrupt the flow of qi in the body. Each organ has specific negative emotions attached to it which, if left unresolved, can manifest as physical problems. In the case of Athlete's Foot these might include:

- Worry and Overthinking: These emotions are associated with the Spleen and can weaken its ability to manage body fluids effectively, promoting Damp conditions.
- Stress and Anger: Associated with the Liver, an excess of these emotions can lead to Liver Qi stagnation, worsening Damp-Heat conditions and exacerbating Athlete's Foot symptoms.
- Fear: The overriding negative emotion of the Kidneys, fear can weaken Kidney energy, disrupting fluid balance and potentially contributing to the condition's severity.

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Acupressure

Acupressure is a technique that can easily be performed as part of your self-care practices. Gentle pressure is applied to specific points on the body with fingers or an acupressure tool to help clear blockages in the meridians, the pathways of the body through which Qi flows.

SP-9 (Yīnlíngquán):

Location: On the inner leg, just below the knee in the depression of the lower border of the bony prominence (medial condyle) of the tibia.

Why: Stimulating this point can help to help regulate Spleen function and resolve Dampness, helping to alleviate the symptoms of Athlete's Foot.

LIV-3 (Tàichōng):

Location: Found on the top of the foot, in the fleshy webbing between the big toe and the second toe, approximately two thumb-widths from the edge of the webbing.

Why: This point soothes Liver Qi stagnation, reducing stress and aiding in the management of Damp-Heat conditions.

KID-3 (Tàixī):

Location: This point is found on the inner side of the foot. Find the highest point of the inner ankle, and then slide your finger down into the depression between the ankle bone and the Achilles tendon.

Why: It strengthens the Kidneys, promoting fluid metabolism and detoxification.

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ST-36 (Zúsānlǐ):

Location: This point is found on the leg, four finger widths down from the bottom of the kneecap, one finger width outside of the shinbone.

Why: This point helps to strengthen the Spleen and Stomach, enhancing overall Qi and aiding in Dampness resolution.

Yang Sheng Practices

There are many practices, lifestyle choices, self-care tools and supplements that can be used to help manage the symptoms and the root cause of Athlete's Foot, including:

- Qigong: Practicing Qigong can improve overall Qi circulation, balance Yin and Yang and strengthen the internal imbalances that contribute to Athlete's Foot.
- Meditation: Stress management techniques such as meditation and breathwork can help to alleviate the emotional blockages and stagnation that can have a bearing on the formation of the condition.
- Gua Sha and Tapping: Applied especially to the lower legs and feet can help to improve circulation and help in dispelling Dampness and Heat. Rotate and flex the ankles regularly to promote circulation in the lower extremities.
- Foot Soaks: Soaking feet in warm water with added Himalayan Sea Salt or herbal infusions can help to clear Dampness and relieve itching.

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- Hygiene: Keep feet clean and dry, especially between the toes, to prevent Dampness accumulation.
- Balanced Diet: Avoid excessive Damp-producing foods such as dairy, greasy foods and overly spicy meals. Emphasise foods that support Spleen Qi, such as cooked vegetables, grains and lean proteins.

Useful Supplements

There are many helpful supplements that can be taken as both preventative self-care and to alleviate symptoms of Athlete's Foot, these include:

- Medicinal Mushrooms: Reishi and Cordyceps can help strengthen the immune system and reduce dampness, aiding in the management of Athlete's Foot by addressing the root cause. Shiitake can benefit skin health, keeping the skin's mantle strong.
- Cinnamon Bark: Warms the channels of the body and helps to dispel Cold and alleviates Damp conditions which will be beneficial in both treating and avoiding fungal infections.
- Tea Tree Oil: The antifungal and antiseptic properties of tea tree oil can be effective in reducing the symptoms of Athlete's Foot, such as itching and scaling. Apply topically to the affected area nightly.
- Garlic Extract: Consider garlic supplements for their natural antifungal properties.
- Probiotics: Maintain a healthy balance of bacteria in the body to help keep the immune function strong, which will help to combat fungal infections.

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Conclusion

Chinese Medicine approaches Athlete's Foot by addressing both the external symptoms and the internal imbalances. Understanding the connection between emotions, organ systems and the external environment offers a comprehensive approach to treatment. This holistic view emphasises the importance of emotional wellbeing, dietary considerations and lifestyle practices in managing and preventing Athlete's Foot.

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Want to know more?

We will be delighted to support you as you continue along your Yang Sheng journey.

The following will get you started:

'Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing' available on Amazon, Waterstone and www.hayoumethod.com

Buy Yang Sheng Book

Healing Movement classes (3 x each week) and live meditations for a more in-depth and healing practice – full details [here](#)

Free Masterclass "[Master Your Health](#)" – understand the 3- step plan for preventative health. Find more Healing Masterclasses [here](#).

Free self-care weekly content [@katiebrindle](#) on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Free regular gua sha demonstrations on [@thehayoumethod](#) Instagram & the opportunity to purchase the accompanying tools from www.hayoumethod.com

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that any of these Yang Sheng techniques are designed to support your overall self-care and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for any Western medical advice or treatment that you may be receiving. You should not use the information in this Guide or on our website for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease and must always consult your doctor if you have any health concerns. Additionally, please note that there are a few contraindications to Yang Sheng techniques, so please visit www.hayoumethod.com to view our comprehensive FAQs.

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