



KATIE BRINDLE

Sinusitis Guide

Treatment techniques Rooted in Chinese Wisdom



Overview

Sinusitis, from a Western perspective, is viewed as inflammation of the sinus cavities, often caused by infections, allergies, or nasal structure issues, presenting symptoms such as nasal congestion and facial pain. However, Chinese Medicine, interprets Sinusitis, or "Bi Yuan", as a disharmony within the flow of Qi, leaving the body susceptible to the invasion of external pathogenic factors such as Wind, Cold, Heat and Dampness, particularly affecting the Lungs, Spleen, and Kidneys. Emotional factors such as stress and worry are also highly implicated in the occurrence of Sinusitis. Treatment in Chinese Medicine seeks to restore balance by addressing both symptoms and the underlying causes, focusing on the health of the associated organs and the flow of Qi.

Causes

- Wind Pathogens: External Wind entering the body can cause acute Sinusitis, manifesting as sudden onset symptoms. Wind often carries other pathogens, for example Heat or Cold, which can lead to varying symptom patterns.
- Heat Toxin: Heat, especially when combined with Dampness, can lead to thick, yellow nasal discharge, a sign of toxic Heat in the sinuses. This can arise from external sources or internal imbalances such as excessive anger, irritability or stress left to become chronic.

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- Damp-Phlegm: Dampness, often due to weak Spleen Qi, can accumulate and turn into Phlegm. Known as Damp-Phlegm, this can then block Qi flow in the sinuses, causing symptoms such as heavy-headedness and a sense of facial fullness with pain, often extreme.
- Cold Invasion: Exposure to cold weather or draughts can introduce Cold into the body, leading to clear nasal discharge and a feeling of chilliness.

Organs Implicated

- Lungs: As the primary organ associated with the respiratory system, the Lungs are directly connected to the nose and sinuses. They govern the flow of Qi and control breathing. In the context of Sinusitis, weak Lung Qi can make us more susceptible to external pathogenic factors such as Wind and Cold, leading to inflammation and congestion in the sinus cavities. The health of the Lungs also influences the strength and efficiency of the immune system, which is central in recovering from sinus infections as well as preventing future occurrences.
- Spleen: The Spleen in Chinese Medicine is pivotal in efficient digestion and the transformation of food into Qi and blood. It also controls the management of fluids within the body. Weakened Spleen Qi can lead to the production of excess Dampness and Phlegm, pathological factors that can severely congest the sinuses. When the Spleen's function of transforming and transporting fluids is compromised, this Dampness can accumulate and migrate to the head, exacerbating the symptoms of the condition, such as mucus formation.

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- Kidneys: The Kidneys are considered the root of all Yin and Yang energies in the body and are essential for overall health and vitality. As our reserves of energy, they support both the Lungs and the Spleen. A deficiency in Kidney energy, particularly Kidney Yang, can lead to a weakened overall constitution, which can then affect the body's ability to ward off external pathogenic factors, indirectly contributing to the development of Sinusitis. Additionally, the Kidneys' role in fluid metabolism means that any imbalance can exacerbate issues of Dampness and Phlegm.
- Liver: Although not as directly involved as the Lungs or Spleen, the Liver's role in ensuring the smooth flow of Qi and emotions throughout the body can have a bearing on Sinusitis. Liver Qi stagnation, often caused by emotional stress, can lead to an overall disharmony in Qi circulation, which can contribute to the stagnation that may eventually manifest as Sinusitis.

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:

- Lungs: The Lungs are directly associated with feelings of sadness, grief and loss. These emotions, when intense or prolonged, can lead to a constriction of Lung Qi, impacting respiratory health and the body's defensive Qi (Wei Qi). A weakened Lung Qi can leave us more susceptible to the invasion of external pathogens that lead to sinus infections and inflammation.

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- Spleen: The Spleen, crucial for digestion and the transformation of food into Qi, is adversely impacted by the negative emotions of the organ: excessive worry and overthinking. These emotions can weaken Spleen Qi, leading to an inefficient metabolism of fluids and the formation of Dampness. This Damp can accumulate and turn into Phlegm, a key factor in the blockage and inflammation of the sinus passages and the production of excess mucus.
- Kidneys: Fear, insecurity and shock are the emotions most associated with the Kidneys. Chronic fear or shock can harm Kidney Qi, weakening the body's overall energy and its ability to resist external pathogenic factors. This weakening can contribute to the manifestation of Sinusitis symptoms, as strong Kidney energy provides additional support for the Lungs and Spleen, both vital in maintaining clear sinuses.
- Liver: The negative emotions of the Liver are anger, irritability and frustration. As the Liver is responsible for the smooth flow of Qi, blood and emotions throughout the body, these negative emotional states, if left unchecked, can result in Liver Qi stagnation, disrupting this smooth flow. When Liver Qi is stagnant, it can negatively impact the Lungs, leading to an accumulation of mucus in the sinuses. Prolonged emotional disturbances can exacerbate this stagnation, intensifying the symptoms of Sinusitis.
- Heart: In Chinese Medicine, the Heart is not only the ruler of the blood but also houses the Shen; the mind or spirit. The negative emotions of the Heart, such as anxiety and shock, can disrupt Heart Qi and disturb the delicate Shen, leading to imbalances in blood circulation and the occurrence of mental disturbances. Although indirect, this can affect sinus health, as a calm and balanced Heart Qi and robust blood circulation is essential for the overall harmony of Qi in the body, including that of the Lungs and Spleen.

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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.

LI-20 (Yíngxiāng)

Location: In the naso-labial groove, at the midpoint beside each nostril.

Why: Known as Welcome Fragrance, this is a key point for opening the nasal passages. Stimulating LI-20 helps clear nasal obstruction, reduces congestion and is particularly effective in alleviating symptoms caused by Wind-Heat or Wind-Cold invading the sinuses. It is also beneficial for sinus headaches and facial pain so often associated with Sinusitis.

M-HN-14 (Bítōng)

Location: Situated at the highest point of the nasolabial groove.

Why: Regular stimulation of Bítōng can help clear mucus from the sinuses, reduce inflammation and alleviate pressure and pain. It is especially useful for chronic or acute sinus congestion.

DU-23 (Shàngxīng)

Location: Located on the midline of the forehead, one thumb-width above the hairline.

Why: Known as Upper Star, DU-23 is effective in clearing the head and relieving sinus pressure, as well as dispelling Wind and calming the spirit. It is used to treat frontal sinus headaches, a heavy head feeling and congestion in the frontal sinuses. It also helps in cases where Sinusitis is accompanied by dizziness or a feeling of mental foginess.

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GB-20 (Fēngchí)

Location: Below the occiput, at the base of the skull, in the depression between the sternocleidomastoid and the trapezius, the two large neck muscles.

Why: Known as Wind Pool, this point is effective for dispelling Wind and relieving headaches. It is especially beneficial in cases where Sinusitis is accompanied by tension headaches or neck stiffness.

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: ST-36 is a crucial point for strengthening the Spleen and Stomach, organs involved in the production and management of mucus and phlegm. Stimulating this point can help reduce Damp-Phlegm in the sinuses, one of the primary underlying causes of Sinusitis.

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 Sinusitis, including:

- Qigong: An ancient Chinese practice combining gentle physical movements that works with the energetic pathways of the body. Practiced regularly, Qigong will strengthen all five key organs of the body and balance the flow of Qi, which is crucial in combating Sinusitis. Movements that specifically target the health of the Lungs, such as “Dragon Clears a Path”, from the 12 Rivers sequence, can enhance their function and resistance to the attack of pathogens. Also, Qigong's calming effect will help to reduce stress, which can be a contributing factor in the occurrence of Sinusitis.

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- **Meditation:** Regular meditation promotes mental and emotional balance, essential for overall health and wellbeing. In the context of Sinusitis, stress management through meditation can significantly calm emotions, alleviating symptoms caused by Liver Qi stagnation, such as headaches and nasal congestion. Meditation can also improve immune function, making the body more resilient to infections.
- **Gua Sha:** This traditional Chinese healing technique involves press-stroking the skin with the rounded edge of a Gua Sha tool. It is effective in enhancing circulation and clearing stagnation. Facial Gua Sha can be particularly beneficial for those suffering from Sinusitis, as it promotes drainage of sinus fluids, relieves congestion and reduces inflammation and pain in the sinus areas. It also helps in relaxing the muscles around the sinuses, further easing discomfort.
- **Breathwork:** Breathing exercises can be very helpful in managing the symptoms of Sinusitis. Techniques such as diaphragm breathing will help to enhance Lung capacity, improve oxygenation of the body and strengthen Lung Qi. Breathwork, especially the “4-7-8” technique, also helps to calm the mind and reduce stress, benefitting mind, body and spirit. Simply inhale for the count of four, hold for the count of seven and exhale for the count of eight. Repeat as often as required.
- **Sleep:** Good quality sleep is essential for the body's healing processes and maintaining the balance of Yin and Yang. For the management of Sinusitis, adequate, restful sleep can support the regeneration of Lung and Kidney Qi, vital for a strong immune function and overall vitality. Maintaining a regular sleep schedule and creating a sleep-conducive environment will significantly benefit sinus health. Ensure the bedroom is cool, dark and well-ventilated and limit stimulation, such as watching television or scrolling through phones, before bedtime.

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- Diet: Dietary choices play a significant role in Chinese Medicine. For Sinusitis, a diet that supports the Spleen and prevents the formation of Damp-Phlegm is recommended. This includes warm, cooked, easily digestible foods, whole grains and root vegetables. Foods rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties, such as ginger, turmeric and garlic, can be beneficial. Drinking plenty of high quality filtered water and herbal teas such as peppermint, chamomile or chrysanthemum can also help in managing sinus congestion and inflammation. Avoiding the “4 Whites” – dairy, flour, salt and sugar - and cold foods and drink is strongly advised, as these can create added burden on the Spleen, exacerbating Dampness and mucus production.

Useful Supplements

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

- Astragalus: Known for its immune-boosting properties, Astragalus strengthens Wei Qi (our defensive energy) to enhance the body's resistance to pathogens. It is particularly useful in preventing recurrent Sinusitis and improving overall respiratory health.
- Turkey Tail: Recognised for its respiratory support and immune-boosting properties, Turkey Tail mushroom can help to enhance the body's defence mechanisms against the external pathogens that can lead to sinus infections. It can also improve the health of the respiratory tract.

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- Reishi: Often used for its immune-enhancing effects, Reishi mushroom can be beneficial in managing Sinusitis, especially if it is chronic. It can also help to reduce inflammation, thereby supporting respiratory health, as well as offering calming and soothing properties.
- Chrysanthemum Tea: Widely used in Chinese Medicine for its cooling properties, Chrysanthemum tea can reduce inflammation in the sinuses and alleviate symptoms such as headache and congestion. It is very helpful in clearing Heat and soothing irritated mucous membranes.
- Ginger: A powerful anti-inflammatory and digestive aid, Ginger can be especially effective in the management of Sinusitis due to its ability to expel Damp and Phlegm, key factors in sinus congestion and the associated feelings of pressure around the face and head.
- Triphala: Although better known as an Ayurvedic formula, Triphala, a combination of three dried fruits, is known for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It helps to detoxify the body and improve digestion, which can reduce the production of the excess mucus and Phlegm associated with Sinusitis.
- Licorice Root: Beneficial for its anti-inflammatory properties and its ability to soothe irritated mucous membranes, a simple tea made from Licorice Root with a little moistening honey, can help ease the discomfort associated with Sinusitis, as well as supporting the health of the respiratory system.

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Conclusion

Chinese Medicine provides a multi-faceted approach to treating the symptoms and root cause of Sinusitis, highlighting the restoration of internal balance and harmony. By linking physical symptoms of the condition to emotional states (anger, stress, grief); external environmental factors (Wind-Heat or Wind-Cold); and especially internal pathogens (Damp-Phlegm), an effective personalised treatment strategy can be achieved for long-term management of Sinusitis. It encompasses the balancing of key organs such as the Lungs, Spleen and Kidneys, whilst also addressing the impact of harmful negative emotions. Techniques such as targeted acupuncture and the use of supplements, can directly fortify the body's defences against Sinusitis, additionally, mindful Yang Sheng practices and lifestyle adjustments can offer both therapeutic and preventive benefits, enhancing overall health, resilience and wellbeing.

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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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