

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR TAKING CHINESE HERBS

Use these guidelines unless given instructions otherwise. Happy herb-cooking, and remember to enjoy the process! The herbs work better when cooked and drank by a peaceful and grateful spirit!

Typically you will be decocting (making a tea by boiling herbs) enough tea for two days. This is usually split into four doses to be taken at specific times during the day. Herbs are best taken thirty minutes before food or a minimum of one hour after food. An exception is if the herbs are somewhat irritating on an empty stomach. This is something that you'll watch for every time you start a new formula. It is best to drink your tea spaced out between meals - the second best time to take them is any other time! Better to take them with food than not at all!

Unless you've been told otherwise, it's best not to take herbs right before bed. Space out taking any prescription medications and drinking your herbal tea by at least an hour.

Some people experience a getting-acquainted period when they start a new formula. This may feel like fullness or slight digestive differences - or the formula may seem extremely hard to get down. Personally I try to distinguish this feeling, which typically goes away in a day or two, from an adverse reaction. Trust your body and contact your herbalist if you have questions. You may start slow, only taking half doses for a day or two to see if that helps. New taste buds are generated every four days. Many times I have had clients complain bitterly about the taste of their herbs, and by their next visit they are exclaiming how much they enjoy taking them!

Do not add sweeteners, natural or artificial, to your herbal tea! The taste of the herbs have a very important therapeutic effect, and the sweeteners may counteract the work the herbs are doing. Try diluting your tea with filtered water and see if that helps them go down. In the case of really dreadful formulas, you can try taking a gulp and then immediately sucking on a lime. Remember that your taste buds will acclimate, usually within a week.

Store your cooked decoction in the refrigerator. Your tea will only keep for about four days; after that, throw it out. Us herb-drinkers love to use Mason jars - glass canning jars. I recommend getting two sizes, a quart jar for storing your big batch of tea and a pint jar for taking your herbs on the go. You can pour the hot decoction directly into the large Mason jar.

When it's time to reheat your herbal tea, DO NOT MICROWAVE IT! Pour your dose into a large coffee mug or your small mason jar and top-off with hot or boiling water. You can also warm your tea in a saucepan, but do not let it boil. Drink your tea hot to room temperature.

For patients on granules: You will not need to cook your herbs. It is already pre-cooked and in a powder form. You will use it like instant coffee - add the prescribed number of scoops to a mug of hot water. You can decide whether you want to use a little bit of water and drink a stronger tea or use more water and have a more dilute drink.

Contact me when you are down to two or three bags of raw herbs or a third of a bottle of granules. Some refills can be done without a follow-up visit, but my general rule of thumb is I want to see you face-to-face a minimum of once a month if your condition is stable and the herbs are agreeing with you. In the case of acute conditions or ones that need a greater level of monitoring, I may not be able to refill your herbal prescription without an office visit. Don't wait until you're out of herbs to contact me!

Every time you are on a new formula I want you to contact me to check-in within the first week of taking your herbs. Please be on the look out for any digestive changes, changes to your bowels and urination, your energy level and quality of sleep.

As always, contact me with any questions or concerns, use your judgment, and trust your body! A big drink of herbal tea to your health!