

Questions and Answers On the Use of Chinese Herbal Medicine

1. What is California's proposition 65?

Proposition 65 is a state wide initiative passed in 1986 known as the safe drinking water and toxic enforcement act of 1986. This legislation was designed to address public concern about exposure to toxic chemicals. Proposition 65 requires that a list of chemicals which are known to cause cancer or reproductive harm be published by the governor of California. Proposition 65 imposes certain controls over the listed chemicals, and is intended to allow California's consumers to make informed choices about the products they purchase.

2. With a label that says "This product contains chemicals known to the state of California to cause cancer and/or birth defects or other reproductive harm," how can I believe that product is safe?

For complying with the proposition 65 warning requirements and avoiding lawsuit, some herbal companies put a warning label on their products. This label appears only in the herbal products sold in California not in other states. The bulk herbs and other herbal products used in our clinic are from the trusted herbal supply companies. They have good control of the quality of the herbal products. A warning label a product has does not indicate that the product is not as safe as other herbal product. In fact, proposition 65 of California make the control of the quality of herbs more restrict.

3. If I consumed a typical herbal formula for long period of time, even several years, would that increase my risk of cancer?

No. As an example, our maximum allowable limit for lead is 3 ppm. Most of our products have a much lower lead content, usually less than 1 ppm. Even at 3 ppm, the total amount of daily exposure to lead would be 13.32 micrograms (based on the average daily dosage of 8 pills 3 times per day). The "no significant risk level" (NSRL) for lead is 18 micrograms per day. Again, this means that even at 18 micrograms per day, taking the formula every day for 70 years would increase your chances of getting cancer by no more than 0.00001%. Also note that the average adult only absorbs 5-15% of the heavy metals they ingest, so the term daily exposure means just that, exposure, and not absorption.

[Notes: NSRL levels are based on taking in heavy metals at these amounts every day for 70 years and still increasing your chances of cancer by only a miniscule amount (0,00001%), and that the NOEL (no observable effect level for reproductive harm) levels are one one-thousandths of the level that may cause reproductive harm.]

4. I heard from people that taking herbs has the risk of cancer or birth defect, should I continue to use herbal products?

Definitely yes. The warning labels on the herbal products are quite scary, but the risk is very small. Most products are at "no significant risk level", that means taking the formula every day at the recommended daily dosage for 70 years would increase your chances of getting cancer by no more than 0.00001%. Also note that the average adult only absorbs 5-15% of the heavy metals they ingest, so the term daily exposure means just that, exposure, and not absorption. Compare this risk with the great clinical results of Chinese herbs, which

is just like zero to a million.

5. What can you briefly tell me about the effects of Chinese herbs?

Traditional Chinese medicine has been practiced in China for more than 4,000 years. It has helped Chinese people through the history. There are more than 20,000 herbs, minerals, shells, etc are used in herbal practice. The herbs have been tested, proved by many generations in the history, including their clinical effect and side effects. The herbs are used for all kind of illness of the body. Before the appearance of western medicine a hundred years ago, Chinese traditional medicine made great contribution to the health care of mankind. Furthermore, the herbs are also used to strengthen the body and to prevent the occurrence of diseases. Traditional Chinese herbal medicine is and will always be the important supplement to health care.

6. Should I take western medicine or Chinese herbal medicine?

It all depends. If the condition is severe and urgent, western treatment measures should be adopted. If you have a chronic mild condition, such as depression, stress, pain, etc., traditional Chinese medicine should be advised. These therapies includes herbal remedies, acupuncture, cupping, Tuina, qigong, etc. Long-term use of drugs will definitely harm your body and cause many unexpected illness. The western drugs do not have a warning label like the herbs do, but they have more listed side effects. Herbs are natural. They are not concentrated chemicals. Therefore, they can be accepted and treated by our body easily. Long term consume of herbs will surely cause less harm than western drugs.

7. What advice would you give me if I decide to take herbal formulas?

The herbal products are considered food supplements in US. That is to say they are close to our food. Many people take those supplements causally. This is not good. The herbs are considered food supplements, but they are not food.

Chinese herbs can be divided into three categories:

- (1) ones that close to food: such as Da zao, sheng jiang, gou qi zi, fu ling, shan zha, hu tao ren, long yan rou, etc. You can take them as food supplements.
- (2) Ones that used to treat common diseases: most herbs are used to correct your imbalances of your body, so they should be taken under supervision. Long-term improper use of this type of herbs may also cause harm to you.
- (3) Ones that have toxicity: This category of herbs should be used by professional herbalists. The dosage should be strictly controlled and they are only used when very necessary.

If you decide to take Chinese herbs, it is always a good idea to consult a Chinese herbalist who has enough training and enough experience in Chinese herbs. A diagnosis is needed before you take Chinese herbs and follow-up observations are also necessary. Individuals do not have this knowledge, so for the safety and for getting the proper effects of the herbs, your Chinese herbal supplements should be prescribed by an experienced herbal practitioner.