

HEALTH

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TCM: loquat leaf

I've had cough for some time, and a friend suggested I take a syrup that contains loquat leaf. Is this a good prescription?

The loquat (*eriobotrya japonica*) is a fruit tree. In Chinese, it is called the pi pa tree because the shape of its fruit resembles the Chinese musical instrument the pipa.

The loquat leaf has a leathery texture and is 10cm to 25cm long, with downy hair covering the

surface. The leaves are usually collected in late spring and early summer and dried in the sun before being used in medicine.

In TCM, the loquat leaf is cool and bitter in nature and is associated with the lung and stomach meridians. It is classified as a respiratory herb. Physicians use it to stop coughs or wheezing, dissolve phlegm and arrest vomiting.

Loquat leaf helps soothe lung chi and prevent coughing. The herb is

often combined with mulberry leaf and hogfennel root in remedies for dry cough or a cough with yellow sticky phlegm.

A long-term dry cough may damage the throat and weaken the lung, which means herbs such as platycodon root, lily bulb and stemona root are used to enhance lung functioning. Honey can facilitate the nourishing effect of loquat leaf, and thus the cough remedies are usually prepared in syrup form.

A classic cough remedy is Pi Pa syrup, which is used for the relief of coughs, hoarseness and sore throat.

Another traditional function of loquat leaf is to harmonise stomach chi, ease thirst and clear heat, which can treat digestive problems such as nausea, vomiting, hiccups, acid reflux. This is commonly combined with tangerine peel, reed rhizome and bamboo shavings.

Loquat leaf is not suitable for a cough with excessive watery phlegm. The usual dosage of loquat leaf is 4.5 grams to 12 grams for decoctions.

While loquat leaf is used for medicinal purposes, the loquat fruit is also beneficial to the lungs. It contains a plentiful supply of calcium, phosphorus, iron and vitamins A and C.

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