

## HEALTH

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## TCM: Under pressure

Hypertension is a silent killer that can cause serious damage to the heart, brain, kidneys and eyes. In most cases, the condition is discovered during a routine checkup.

From a traditional Chinese medicine perspective, hypertension or high blood pressure usually originates from overstimulated emotions, poor diet and internal weakness. These cause an imbalance of *yin* and *yang* and a disturbance of *chi* (vital energy) and blood. The liver and kidneys are the

organs most affected because they deal with the production and movement of these throughout the body.

The formation of internal pathogens such as wind, fire, phlegm and blood stasis gives rise to different disharmony patterns. Since Chinese medicine rarely checks blood pressure, hypertension is diagnosed through symptoms such as dizziness, headaches and sudden blackouts. (One Chinese medical classic says: "dizziness caused by wind is related to a liver disorder.") There may also be

thirst, constipation, yellowish urine, bloodshot eyes and a red tongue coated with yellow "fur".

Treating the condition means suppressing the hyperactive liver, calming the body's *yang*, expelling heat and extinguishing wind. One formula is a decoction of gastrodia and uncaria (*Tianma Gouteng Yin*). In this recipe, gastrodia root, uncaria stem and abalone shell calm the liver and suppress exuberant *yang*. Gardenia fruit and baical skullcap root clear heat in the

liver meridian and stop it ascending to the head. Achyranthes root ensures a proper downward flow of blood from the head and motherwort herb activates the blood and promotes urination. Eucommia bark and mistletoe nourish the liver and kidneys, and fleece-flower stem and poria calm the mind.

When a TCM practitioner diagnoses the disharmony patterns associated with hypertension, it may mean the condition has progressed to a stage where complications or organ damage has

occurred. TCM may not be as quick and convenient as western medicine when it comes to lowering blood pressure, but it can still be a complementary treatment, helping to alleviate symptoms, reducing organ damage, preventing complications and improving quality of life.

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**Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner**