

HEALTH

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TCM

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Clear the nose

Sinusitis usually starts with a cold due to a change in the weather, or an allergy that causes inflammation of the para-nasal sinuses. It can include a stuffy nose, nasal discharge, diminished sense of smell, headache, sore throat and pressure around the cheeks, eyes and forehead.

Lily-flower magnolia, also known as barbarian bud (*xin yi hua*), is a common herb for opening nasal obstructions and clearing nasal discharge. The dried magnolia flower buds look like the tip of a writing brush. Light in colour, fragile in texture, and with an aromatic odour, they have a pungent, cool and slightly bitter taste. According to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), its warming properties can dispel wind-cold pathogens on the body's surface. The herb's active ingredients travel to the head and enter the nose.

Barbarian bud was first documented in the *Divine Husbandman's Classic of the Materia Medica* in the second century. It was named by a government official who suffered from severe nasal problems and was cured by taking the herb that grew on the frontier of China, a place of many "barbarians" (*yi*).

It can be taken in a decoction or applied topically, which comes in powder form or as an essential oil. Pharmacological studies have shown that the essential

oil of barbarian bud has an anti-inflammatory effect on the nasal lining, which helps to reduce mucous secretion, relieve capillary contraction, and promote local blood flow. The herb is now available in nasal drops, inhalers or ointments.

Barbarian bud is mostly used for symptom relief when taken alone. However, it can be used in combination with other herbs.

A common treatment, magnolia flower powder (*xin yi san*), consists of herbs such as barbarian bud, bugbane rhizome, ledebouriella root, dahurian angelica root and Chinese lovage.

This can unblock obstructions and target nasal discharge caused by wind-cold. People with this type of sinusitis have nasal congestion with clear discharge and headaches. Another formula, cocklibur fruit powder (*cang er zi san*), consists of cocklibur fruit, barbarian bud, dahurian angelica root and peppermint. It's used for wind-heat conditions, such as those where there's yellowish nasal discharge, a sore throat and a yellow-coated tongue.

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