

HEALTH

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TCM: Tonsillitis

Tonsillitis is a common cause of sore throats. The tonsils are important immune glands. Normally, they fight germs entering the body through the mouth and nose, but sometimes they're overwhelmed by a bacterial or viral infection and inflammation results.

Symptoms include a sore throat, difficulty in swallowing, headache, fever, enlarged and tender nodes in the jaw and neck. Glands are red, swollen and may be coated with a white or yellowish substance.

From a TCM perspective, three conditions can lead to the onset of tonsillitis: exogenous wind-heat evils attack the throat; improper diet leads to an over-heated stomach; or deficiencies in the lung and kidney due to acute disease or constitutional weakness.

Wind-heat invasion manifests with a sore throat, mild difficulty in swallowing, plus a fever, chills, runny nose and cough. The tonsils are mildly swollen and the tongue is covered by a light yellow fur. TCM practitioners focus on clearing the wind-heat using herbs such as honeysuckle flower, forsythia capsule and schizonepeta, while burdock fruit, peppermint and liquorice root soothe the throat.

Symptoms of an over-heated stomach are severe sore throat, difficulty in swallowing, high fever, sweating, bad breath, thirst and constipation. The whole throat region is red and swollen with yellow patches. The tongue is red and covered by yellow, greasy fur. Gardenia fruit, baical

skullcap root, rhubarb and golden thread rhizome clear the heat, while figwort root and balloon flower root nourish the throat.

Deficiencies in the lungs and kidneys lead to recurrent sore throats. The tongue is red and covered by a very thin fur. TCM practitioners focus on nourishing the organs and soothing the throat, using rehmannia root, lily-turf tuber, figwort root, peony root and Thunberg fritillary bulb.

To alleviate acute tonsillitis, get plenty of rest. Take lots of fluids, and avoid spicy and greasy foods. Radishes, tomatoes, sponge cucumbers, Chinese cabbages, mung beans, edible amaranth, water chestnuts, lemons, watermelons and persimmon help clear heat and promote healing.

If you suffer recurrent bouts, balance work with rest, avoid eating too much raw, frozen and spicy foods, and exercise regularly.

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Before taking medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner