

## HEALTH

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## TCM: sole food

Our feet take a lot of punishment. They're often stuffed into ill-fitting shoes in the name of fashion and subjected to all kinds of physical hardship.

The feet contain 26 bones and many joints, ligaments, muscles and tendons, and problems are usually the result of accumulated abuse and neglect.

One way of keeping feet healthy is to soak them. Ancient physicians say soaking feet in the spring consolidates the internal organs; in the summer it relieves tiredness and promotes digestion; in the autumn it promotes nourishment inside the body and prevents respiratory problems; and in winter it enhances resistance against cold weather.

Herbal foot bathing is widely used as a supplementary healing therapy for various conditions such as skin disease, joint pain, hypertension, insomnia and childhood bed-wetting.

You should select a recipe that targets a specific condition. Sappanwood (30 grams), peach kernel (12 grams), Chinese safflower (10 grams) and pyrite (20 grams) promote healing after foot injuries; kudzu root (60 grams) and alum (30 grams) reduce foot sweating; Cassia twig (15 grams), dried ginger (15 grams) and monkshood (10 grams) relieve frostbite or limb coldness; belvedere fruit (30 grams) and

cibotium (30 grams) can help soften calluses; golden larch bark (15 grams) and sopora root (15 grams) stop itchiness and prevent foot infections.

Magnetite (30 grams), baical skullcap root, chrysanthemum and fleece flower stem (15 grams of each) promote sleeping; gambir vine stem (20 grams, crushed) and borneol (5 grams) are good for hypertension; motherwort herb, nutgrass flatsedge rhizome, frankincense, myrrh and selfheal fruit spike (20 grams of each) can help relieve menstrual pain; Himalayan teasel root, cibotium and dodder seed (30 grams of each), pilose asiabell root and poria (20 grams of each), liquorice root (6 grams) are for bed wetting in children.

Herbal decoctions should be sufficient to cover the ankles, and kept between 50-60 degrees Celsius for at least 15 minutes.

Massaging the toes and soles of the feet enhances the effects.

After bathing, wipe the feet properly, put on lotion for protection or anti-fungal preparation if necessary, raise the feet and rest for 15 to 30 minutes.

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**Rose Tse and Jenny Eagleton**

**Consult a podiatrist for a complete treatment plan if foot problems interfere with your daily life**