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How to Treat Allergies and Prevent Frequent Colds in Children

By Brian B. Carter, MS, LAc

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Allergy medications like Allegra and Nasacort are one way to go if you need an allergy medication. Another general allergy relief product is the Chinese Herbal Medicine, Jade Windscreen. Traditionally, it is indicated for allergy prevention and frequent colds. This Q&A about child allergy gives information about all of this, and discusses the plum flower brand herb formula made by the Mayway Corp.

Question: I am new to Chinese Medicine and have taken my adult-sized 13 year old to an Acupuncturist who has prescribed Plum Flower brand Jade Screen Tea Pills for her (Yu Ping Feng San Wan). She has been directed to take 12 pills 1X daily to help her with her immune system and allergies. It is distributed by Mayway and has huang qi, bai zhu, and fang feng. I am trying to investigate these herbs to determine if they could harm her in any way. She is currently taking Allegra and Nasacort, a steroid nasal spray, for allergies. Do you have any info or recommendations of sources of info for me? Many thanks!

–Marjie

A: Marjie, that is a great question!

I'm glad you are trying to stay informed– a bit of skepticism toward any medicine makes sense these days... There is a lot of weird stuff that gets passed under the guise of 'Alternative Medicine.'

Welcome to Oriental Medicine! Chinese herbal medicine is quite different from western pharmaceutical medicine. I am glad that you are seeing a practitioner for herbs– herbal self–prescription can be dangerous. If your acupuncturist has been trained in herbs (the degree of herbal training varies by school and by state), then they should know what they're doing.

YPFS (Yu Ping Feng San) is often prescribed for exactly the purpose you described. It is also commonly taken to prevent colds, especially if they are chronic. It may take 1–5 months for the effect to take hold. YPFS is indicated for people with symptoms of: aversion to drafts, spontaneous sweating (without exercise), recurrent colds, shiny pale complexion, and these signs: pale Tongue with white coating, floating deficient soft Pulse.

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Explaining the actions of any herbal formula can be as complex as one of those pharmaceutical package inserts with all the biochemistry, drawings of molecules, etc. Oriental Medicine is its own complete system of medicine complete with its own set of terms and concepts. But I will attempt to explain YPFS to you in regular English:

Huang Qi (astragalus) strengthens the qi, and regulates the exterior; this means that it strengthens the wei qi (the type of qi that most closely correlates with white blood cell immunoactivity). By stabilizing the exterior, HQ prevents inappropriate sweating and makes it hard for pathogens (allergens, viruses, etc.) to enter. HQ is a very safe herb. More on Astragalus and viruses.

Bai Zhu (atractylodis) strengthens qi in the center of the body (the digestive system), which according

to Oriental Medical theory, indirectly strengthens wei qi.

Fang Feng (ledebouriellae) is also generally a wei qi level herb which expels wind (Wind is an Oriental Medical concept, not easy to explain in a few words, but perhaps you can think of it as "any external disease-causing agent that could overwhelm the immune system."). F.Y.I. the word feng means wind... just the same in this herb's name as in the name of the formula.

'Jade Windscreen' is so named because the formula creates a screen between the patient and wind invasion. The formula is said to be as precious and valuable as jade.

To get back to your question— "Can these herbs harm her in any way?" The answer is No so long as your practitioner's diagnosis is correct. The herb formula in itself is quite safe, and has no real cautions or contraindications.

Pharmaceuticals, Patent Herbs, & Personalized Herbs

1. Allegra and Nasacort both have short and long-term side effects:

Allegra Side-Effects: Cold/flu's, nausea, dysmenorrhea, drowsiness, dyspepsia, fatigue

Nasacort Side-Effects: Oral candidiasis, hoarseness, dry throat, irritated throat, dry mouth, wheezing, cough, facial edema

If the YPFS works, these drugs might become unnecessary or redundant. Of course, that needs to be decided by a qualified practitioner familiar with your daughter's medical history.

2. Pharmaceutical prescription is more potentially harmful than Chinese Herbal medicine, especially when patients are on more than one drug for the long-term. This is because even when properly prescribed, pharmaceuticals still can cause side-effects. When properly prescribed, Chinese herbal formulas do not cause side-effects. In Oriental Medicine, there is not one herb or formula for each disease. We take the disease into account, but we also figure in each person's unique internal landscape. Appropriate herbal prescriptions have much fewer and more benign side-effects than pharmaceuticals because they utilize multiple active ingredients to prevent any one agent from causing

imbalance.

3. It is possible to achieve good results with patent (pre-formulated) herbal formulas like the mayway pills, but the ultimate form of Chinese Herbal medicine is personalized prescription. These are available in powdered and raw herb forms, and require the attention and prescription of a highly-trained OM practitioner. Not all acupuncturists are trained to this degree, and many of those that are still rely heavily on patent herbs anyway.

Hope this helps– If you have any other questions, let me know!

B

Acupuncturist, herbalist, and medical professor Brian B. Carter founded the alternative health megasite The Pulse of Oriental Medicine (<http://www.PulseMed.org/>). He is the author of the book "Powerful Body, Peaceful Mind: How to Heal Yourself with Foods, Herbs, and Acupressure"

(November, 2004). Brian speaks on radio across the country, and has been quoted and interviewed by Real Simple, Glamour, and ESPN magazines.

Facts About Allergies For Parents

By News Canada

(NC)–Did you know that more than 20 percent of school-age children suffer from allergies. A condition that, if not diagnosed properly, can interfere with a child's ability to concentrate.

In fact, according to the U.S. National Institutes of Health, allergies account for 2 million missed school days each year, and on any given day more than 10,000 children are absent from school due to troublesome allergy symptoms. In Canada, this represents approximately 200,000 missed school days and more than 1,000 children missing school on any given day because of allergies. Allergies can have a significant impact on a child's quality of life.

Fortunately, the allergy experts at Claritin, the leader in the treatment of seasonal and perennial allergies, have developed appropriate information to help parents determine whether a child suffers from allergies.

For instance, if one parent has allergies, chances are one in three that a child will have an allergy, and if both parents have allergies the chance jumps to seven in 10.

By providing parents with the appropriate information, they will be better equipped to consult with their healthcare provider and set up an appropriate system to help avoid a child's allergy triggers.

It can be hard for parents to distinguish between colds and allergies without help, because many symptoms of each are similar.

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The casual misdiagnosis that "it's just a cold" can result in unnecessary suffering for the child with allergies. Here are some common allergy symptoms parents should look for:

A runny or stuffy nose and constant sneezing

Breathing through the mouth or snoring, due to a stuffy nose

Itchy nose, eyes, or skin

Rubbing the nose upward with the palm of the hand (also known as the "allergy salute")

Watery eyes or dark circles under the eyes

Headaches, earaches, or hearing problems

Changes in behavior; children may be irritable or hyperactive

Once a physician has determined that a child has allergies, parents should know there are treatment options available to ease the symptoms including avoidance of allergy triggers, allergy shots, and/or

medications. One medication in particular, Claritin Syrup is learning friendly for children. It is the only non-sedating antihistamine for children to treat both seasonal and year-round allergies without causing drowsiness.

For more information on allergies and their effect on learning contact 1-800-665-1507 or visit

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Facts About Allergies For Parents

Allergies Causes & Treatments

Why Do You Have Asthma?

When Your Dog Starts To Sneeze

Air Purifiers: Putting A Stop To Airborne Allergies

Control your Headache!

Help Your Child Succeed In School

The Ultimate Rose Garden– Neighbors envy, owners pride!

The Alphabet of Birds

Bread And Biscuit Baker's And Sugar–Boiler's Assistant



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