



Understanding Cough And Its Remedies

/ Cough, General Health, Well-being / Physician Tan Kang Ting

Coughing is your body's natural reaction to clear irritants in your throat and airways.

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) theory, the lungs are delicate organs and are most susceptible to external pathogens or factors.

These are the common questions asked by a TCM physician during a consultation:

- **Duration:** When did your cough start? Have you been coughing for the past 3 days, 1 week or more than 1 month?
- **Time:** When do you cough more? Is it more in the morning, more at night or throughout the day? Is it after eating or after a stimulus like smoke, emotional outbursts or when you lie down?
- **Colour and texture of the sputum:** What is the colour of the sputum? Is it easy to spit out?
- **Other accompanying symptoms** such as runny nose, headache or changes in bowel movement

In TCM, there are 2 main categories of cough: Cough induced by external pathogens or external factors (外感咳嗽) and internal imbalances in the organ systems (内伤咳嗽).

Cough induced by External pathogens or factors (外感咳嗽)

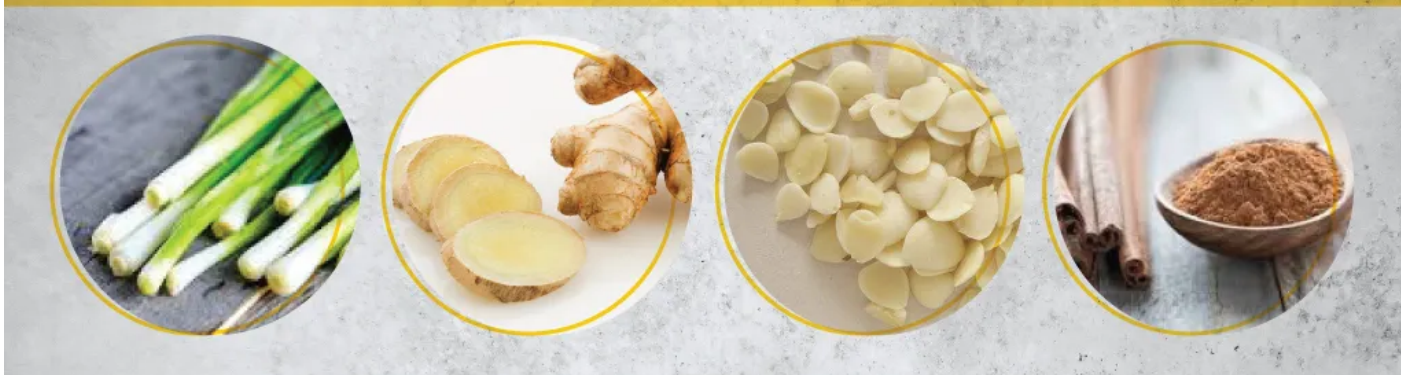
External pathogens can easily invade the lungs through the mouth, nose and skin, impairs the function of the lungs and resulting in cough. External factors like weather changes can also trigger coughs.

These coughs usually has a sudden onset and can recover quickly with immediate appropriate treatments and lifestyle changes.

Types Of Acute Cough	Similarities	Main Differences	Usually Accompanied With
Wind-cold 风寒	Aversion to cold and/or heat Headache	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Transparent or white phlegm that is easy to spit out	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Runny nose with clear/white nasal discharge● Body aches
Wind-heat 风热		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Coughing frequently;● Sticky or yellow phlegm● Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Runny nose with sticky nasal discharge● Dry mouth or feeling thirsty● Prone to perspiration
Wind-dryness 风燥		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dry and/or transient continuous cough;● No or little sticky phlegm● Itchy throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dry throat and lips

Food therapy to relieve acute onset of cough

For **Wind-cold cough** || Spring Onion Ginger Soup



Ingredients

- Spring onion with White Bulb and Roots (连须葱白), 3 stalks
- Fresh ginger (生姜), 3-5 slices
- Chinese Apricot Kernels (北杏仁), 1 tbs
- A pinch of Cinnamon (肉桂粉)

Instructions

1. Bring all the ingredients to boil.
2. Once boiling, reduce the heat and let it simmer for 10 minutes. Drink it while it's warm and remember to REST!

This soup helps to dispel the cold wind and warms the body.

For **Wind-heat cough** || Mulberry Chrysanthemum tea



Ingredients

- Mulberry Leaf (桑叶), 10g
- Chrysanthemum (菊花), 10g
- Burdock Seed (牛蒡子), 3-5g

- Peppermint (薄荷), 3g – add in last

Instructions

1. Add all ingredients (except peppermint) to a pot and bring to a boil.
2. Once boiling, reduce the heat, add the peppermint in and let it simmer for about 10 minutes.
3. Pour tea through a strainer and drink it while it's warm.
4. Rest!

This tea helps to dispel excess heat and soothes the throat.



Ingredients

- Dried Snow Fungus (雪耳), 1pc
- Chinese Pear (雪梨), 1pc
- Chinese Apricot Kernels (南北杏), 1 Tbs
- Honey Date (蜜枣), 1pc

Instructions

1. Soak the snow fungus for at least 30 minutes. It should be fully immersed in the water. On the other hand, you can also soak it overnight if you prefer a much softer texture. Remove the hard stem ends and tear the rest into smaller portions for easy consumption later.
2. Remove the seeds for the Chinese pear and cut into small portions.
3. Bring all the ingredients to boil. Once boiling, reduce the heat and let it simmer for 30 minutes.

This soup helps to moisten the lungs to stop coughing.

Cough induced by internal imbalances in the organs systems (五脏六腑)

The ancient Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon 《黄帝内经》 book wrote :“五脏六腑皆令人咳，非独肺也”. Pro functional imbalances in the lungs and other related organ systems such spleen, stomach, liver and la

intestine, can lead to a persistent cough.

A cough caused by internal organ systems imbalances usually develops gradually and has a longer medical history. It tends to have flares up from time to time. Overtime, you may have exhausted your Lung *qi* (肺气), which is necessary for defence and recovery and chronic cough develops.

There are various types of chronic cough.

Types Of Chronic Cough	Duration	Phlegm production	Other Symptoms
Damp Cough 痰湿咳嗽	Coughing for more than 3 weeks	Watery white or foamy phlegm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Productive cough● Cough is aggravated with consumption of food, especially with sweet, oily and fried food <i>Others:</i> Fatigue, bloating, sense of heaviness, loss of appetite, watery or loose stools
Damp heat Cough 痰热咳嗽		Thick or sticky yellow phlegm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Chesty cough with rattling feeling within the chest● Aversion to heat, hasty breathing, dry and sticky aftertaste in the mouth and feeling thirsty
Liver-fire Cough 肝火犯肺		Globus sensation (梅核气): Sensation of having a lump in the throat, often triggered by anger (no actual physical obstruction). <i>It is not painful and may be present even when one is not eating or coughing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Transient continuous cough● Coughing is often triggered with emotional upsets or stress● Often complains of bitter taste in mouth, dizziness or a bloated sensation in the chest area
Lung Yin-Deficiency Cough 肺阴虚咳嗽		Little or no sticky phlegm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dry cough and may be more severe at night (3-5am)● Dry throat, hot flushes or flushed cheeks or experience night sweats

TCM physicians take into consideration the characteristics, sound of the cough, duration and accompanying symptoms to identify the type of cough. Prescriptions are then tailored to the individual's body constitution and symptoms to resolve the underlying disharmony and relieve cough.

Persistent cough can be effectively managed using TCM herbal prescription and/or acupuncture.

Lifestyle modifications is also important to quicken the recovery of cough

- Abstain from eating any sweet, spicy, fried or oily food as it can trigger cough and burden the spleen.

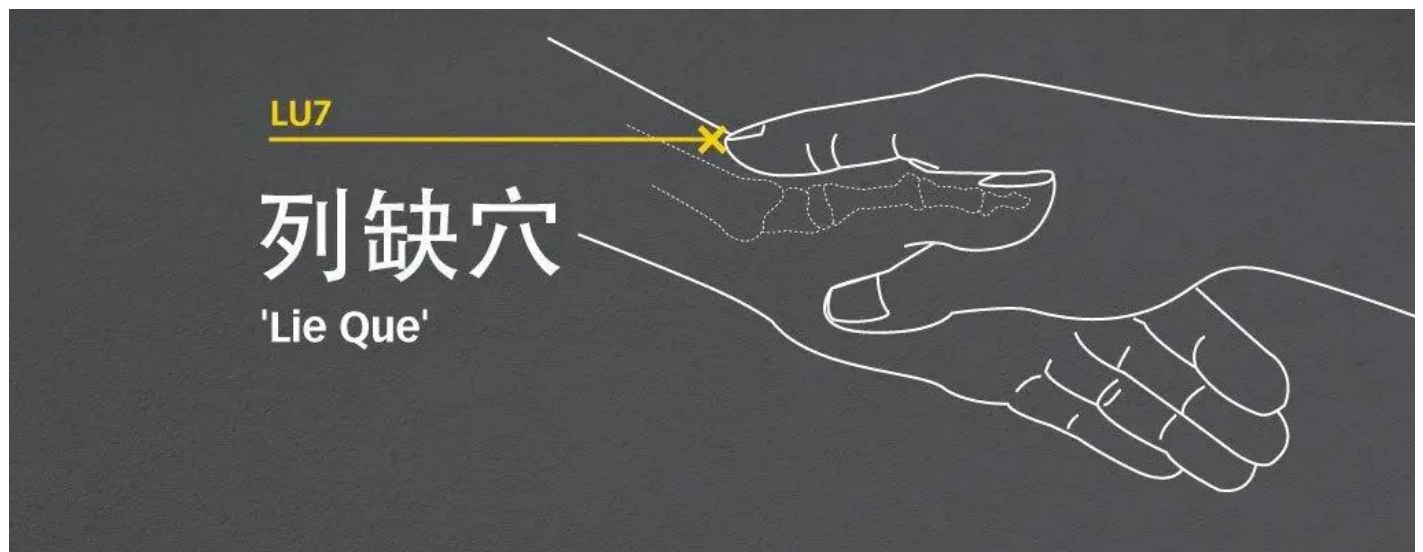
Young children should avoid milo, sweetened yoghurt, yakult or sweet snacks when they are coughing.

The spleen oversees the intake, processing, transformation and distributions of nutrients, and fluids from food.

Intake of these food weakens the spleen, thus becoming less efficient in the transformation and transportation of fluids, accumulating dampness i.e. phlegm production.

- Chicken is considered a 'heaty' food. If you have a **'heaty'** cough (with symptoms of yellowish sputum, sore throat and/or constipation), the consumption of chicken will not be recommended as it could increase your heatiness, worsening the cough.
- Have sufficient rest of at least 7 hours a day. Try to be asleep by 11pm.
- Have regular bowel movements.

Acupressure to relieve cough



Location: Spread the thumb and index finger of both hands, crossing them so that the index finger of one hand comes to rest on the styloid process of the other.

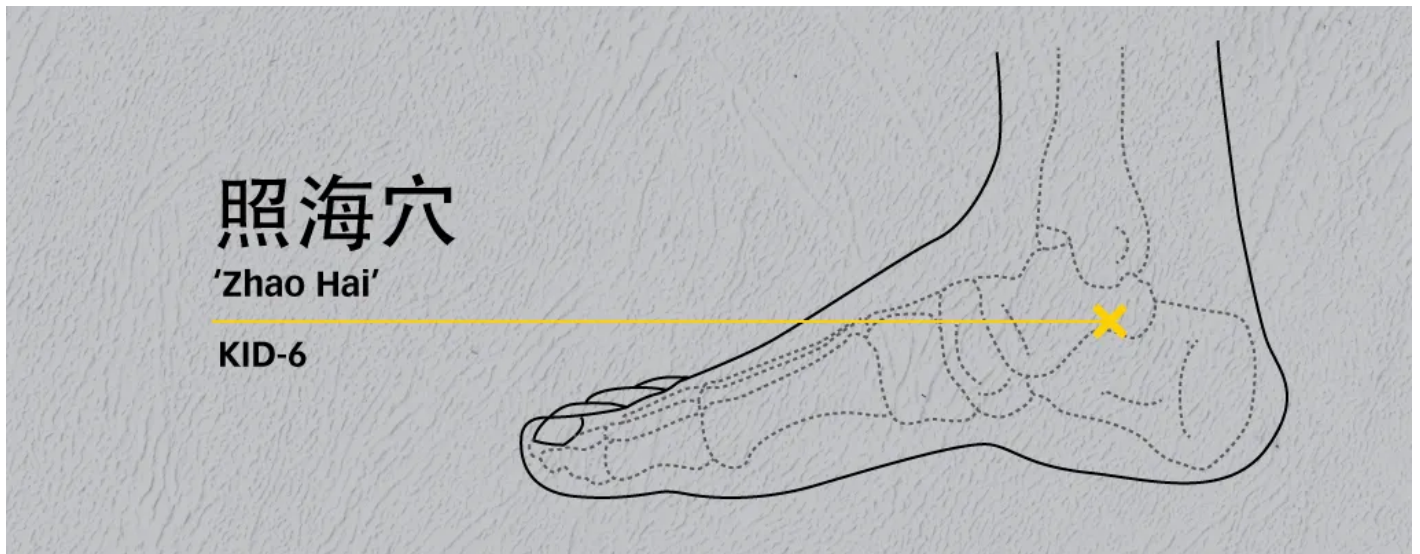
Direction: Gently massage the point for 1 minute.

Acupressure to relieve dry throat



Location: On the neck in the depression above the upper border of the hyoid bone.

Direction: Gently massage on the point for 30 seconds.



Location: In a depression below the tip of the medial malleolus.

Direction: Gently massage on the point for 1 minute

Note: Information provided is not a substitute for a physician or any form of medical care. Individual symptoms differ due to different body constitutions and diagnosis. One should consult a licensed TCM practitioner for accurate diagnosis and treatment.

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