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Longevity Update: What is 'Fo-Ti-Tieng'?

A few weeks ago we ran a feature article on longevity, how long our bodies are designed to last and what the best lifestyle changes are to extend both the length and quality of our life. In the story we talked about the Chinese Professor Li Chung Yun who lived for over two hundred and fifty years. He said that his secret for longevity included *“two powerful rejuvenating herbs, Fo-Ti-Tieng and ginseng.”*

Quite a few of you wrote in after reading the article asking specifically as to what Fo-Ti-Tieng really is.

According to drugs.com, Fo-ti is also known as 'He Shou Wu,' or in English, any one of the following: a flowery knotweed, climbing knotweed, Chinese cornbind, or tuber fleece-flower. In some areas it is also called Asiatic pennywort, spade leaf or coin-wort. It is native to central and southern China and is distributed in Japan and Taiwan where it has a reputation as being the 'Elixir of Life' plant. It is a perennial climbing herb, which can grow to 30 feet in height. The plant has red stems, heart-shaped leaves and white or pink flowers. The roots of 3- to 4-year-old plants are dried in autumn and prepared either raw, steamed or cured with the

stems, seeds and leaves to make this traditional Chinese tonic which apparently has been used and documented since 713 AD.

Used in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurvedic medicine, amongst the long list of symptoms it is used to treat, there is an interesting reference to longevity; *“Regarded as a rejuvenating plant, fo-ti has been thought to prevent aging and to promote longevity. According to folklore, the older and larger roots have the most power, potentially offering immortality.”*

However, there is some confusion between 'fo-ti' and 'fo-ti-tieng.' drugs.com specifically warns that 'fo-ti' is the unprocessed plant and it *“should not be confused with the commercial product Fo-ti Tieng, which does not contain fo-ti.”* This seems odd, given that Li Chung Yun was talking about fo-ti-tieng as being the reason for his longevity back in the seventeen hundreds, long, long before there was any commercially produced 'fo-ti-tieng'.

I suspect this separation of fo-ti and fo-ti-tieng is the result of modern branding and trademarking, plus the likelihood that over time the traditional ingredients may have been



very little information available to clarify the difference. Hence I would like to invite any Chinese herbalists or practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine to email me their views on this along with anything further they can add to the above discussion and we will

changed from the traditional formulae in some of the industrially manufactured commercial brands (much like how today many of our once reputable brands of vitamins and supplements have been bought out by Big Pharma and now have very little of their core natural ingredients).

To help better understand what fo-ti-tieng is that Li Chung was talking about, in his book *Regeneration*, Kevin Garner confirms that Li Ching's 'fo-ti-tieng' is actually hydrocotyle asiatica minor. This is known as Centella or Gotu Kola in homeopathy. The stated benefits of 'fo-ti' / hydrocotyle asiatica include a rejuvenating effect on the whole body, increased hormone production along with a beneficial influence on the whole endocrine system. It also acts as a digestant, improves metabolism and has a profound effect on the brain and nerve cells.

'Fo-ti' is available as a supplement from certain manufacturers such as NOW (which is currently a good quality brand) and Piping Rock (who market the Fo-Ti root extract as 'He Shou Wu').

There is clearly a grey-area between 'fo-ti' and 'fo-ti-tieng,' particularly with regard to Li Chung's 'secret of longevity' and sadly there is

run a follow-up article to further our collective knowledge.

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Sources for this article include:
The book 'Regeneration, Live Longer, Live Better' by Kevan Garner C.Ph.T., M.H.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3116297/>
<https://www.drugs.com/npc/fo-ti.html>
<https://weclinic.in/blog/hydrocotyle-asiatica-uses#:~:text=Hydrocotyle%20Asiatica%20is%20commonly%20known,the%20flowering%20plant%20family%20Apiaceae.>

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