

HEALTH

Edited by Susan Schwartz
susan.schwartz@scmp.com

TCM: Root solution

Influenza and the common cold occur mostly in the autumn and winter seasons. Both illnesses are respiratory tract infections. However, influenza usually hits harder, with signs such as a high fever, sporadic chills, fatigue, sweating, and muscle or joint pain.

Bupleurum root (*chai hu*) is a perennial herb growing in sunny places such as meadows and hillsides.

It is widely distributed throughout the northeastern provinces of China. Its root, which is used as the medicinal part, is dug out from the soil in spring or autumn and dried in the sun.

The herb is bitter, pungent and cool and can be effective acting on the liver and gallbladder.

Traditionally, bupleurum is added to prescriptions to bring down various feverish conditions, particularly in intermittent or alternating chills and fever patterns.

Bupleurum is also an important herb

for *qi* stagnation in the liver, a TCM condition associated with menstrual disorders, breast problems, hepatitis, gallbladder infections, and emotional distress. Rambling powder (*xiao yao san*), a formula comprising bupleurum root, white peony root and angelica root, can help relieve irregular menses or premenstrual syndrome.

Modern scientific research has demonstrated the anti-inflammatory and hepatoprotective functions of bupleurum root in its clinical treatments of acute hepatitis, gallbladder infection and intercostal neuralgia.

Rose Tse and Jenny Eagleton are with Integrated Chinese Medicine Holdings (icm.com.hk)

Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner.

