

HEALTH

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TCM

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Herb: fully loaded

Angelica root (*Radix angelicae sinensis*) is a well-known blood-tonifying herb that's especially good for women.

The Chinese name *dang gui* means "ought to return". In ancient China, women used the herb to promote fertility because bearing offspring was considered an important duty.

Occasionally, when their husbands were on long trips, wives could only make themselves ready for pregnancy. *Dang Gui* then became a mark of a lovesick wife waiting for her husband's return.

Once you've smelled the aroma of the Angelica root, you're unlikely to forget it. The signature aroma is mainly due to its 0.4 to 0.7 per cent volatile oil.

Angelica root is used to treat abdominal pain, diarrhoea, a restless foetus and lower back pain during pregnancy. However, conventional medicine regards pregnancy as a contraindication for using Angelica root because of its effects on uterine smooth muscles, which may lead to miscarriage. So, it should be used during pregnancy only if recommended by someone who's a skilled traditional Chinese medicine practitioner.

Angelica root, according to TCM theory, is sweet, acrid, bitter and warm. It enters the

heart, liver and spleen channels (meridians), and is said to be good for tonifying blood, invigorating circulation and relieving pain.

The herb is particularly useful in treating blood deficiencies and blood stagnation. Some common symptoms of a blood deficiency include anaemia, a pale complexion, brittle nails, dry hair, dizziness, blurred vision and heart palpitations. It's also said to be good for menstrual disorders induced by a blood deficiency or blood and *chi* stagnation.

According to TCM, sufficient blood nourishment is important for women's health. Blood is ruled by the heart, and a healthy heart shows in the face. Taking Angelica root helps maintain sufficient blood nourishment in the body, which gives individuals

rosy cheeks, making them look healthier. Angelica root is said to be useful for painful menstruation (dysmenorrhea) and menopause that's usually associated with a blood deficiency. The herb, combined with others, can help relieve vasomotor symptoms associated with menopause such as hot flushes, perspiration and chills.

In one study, a herbal mixture containing Angelica root, *paeonia lactiflora* root, *ligusticum rhizome*, *atractylodes rhizome*, *alismatis rhizome*, and *sclerotium poria* was reported to reduce menopausal disturbances by 70 per cent.

Angelica root can be taken when not menstruating as recommended by a TCM practitioner or made into a drink. Cover 15 grams of Angelica root

and eight red Chinese dates with water. Simmer for 30 minutes and serve hot.

Although Angelica root has excellent health benefits for healthy individuals with a mild blood deficiency, caution should be taken if other discomforts such as hot flushes, dark yellow urine, constipation or diarrhoea are experienced either before or after taking the herb. If you have these symptoms, consult a TCM practitioner about which herbal combinations with Angelica root are appropriate to maintain a healthy balance in the body.

Rose Tse and Angela Collingwood are editors for Shen-Nong, a subsidiary of Integrated Chinese Medicine. Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or general practitioner