

# The Use of Vinegar in Chinese Medicine

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In Chinese medicine, there is no hard and fast line between a food and a medicinal. As the well-known Chinese saying goes, "Food and medicinals [have] a common source." Following on the heels of the popularity of artisanal olive oils, artisanal vinegars are quickly becoming a focus of attention in the world of cooking and cuisine. So far, this attention has mainly centered on these vinegars' extraordinary flavors. However, just as many have discovered the healing benefits of olive oil, vinegar also has its many health benefits and medicinal uses. This is especially so in Chinese medicine. In Chinese, vinegar is called *ku jiu*, bitter wine, *chun cu*, pure vinegar, and *mi cu*, rice vinegar. It is primarily made in China from fermented millet, wheat, sorghum, and rice. According to Chinese medical theory, vinegar's flavor is sour and bitter and its nature or temperature is warm. It enters the liver and stomach channels, and its functions are that it scatters stasis, stops bleeding, resolves toxins, and kills worms. In professional Chinese medicine, various Chinese medicinals are stir-fried in vinegar in order to either help target them to the liver-gallbladder or to increase their functions of moving the qi and quickening the blood. However, in Chinese folk medicine, vinegar is a medicinal in its own right, treating a wide range of disorders and complaints, including internal medicine, gynecological, dermatological, and traumatological conditions. Below is a selection of folk recipes taken from Li Bing-shen *et al.*'s *Cu Dan Zhi Bai Bing (The Treatment of Hundreds of Diseases with Vinegar & Eggs)*, Shanghai Science & Technology Publishing Co., Shanghai, 1992.

**Prevention of common cold:** Soak 100g each of fresh ginger and garlic in 500ml of vinegar in a tightly sealed jar for 30 days or more. Then drink 10ml of the resulting liquid after each meal.

**Indigestion from overeating:** Take 15ml of vinegar, and 1-3 grams of fine green tea. Put the vinegar and tea leaves in a teacup and pour 300ml of boiling water over it. Allow to steep for five minutes. Then divided into three doses and drink one dose at a time as needed.

**Viral hepatitis &/or enteritis:** Eat (or drink) 30ml of vinegar each time, three times per day.

**Bacterial dysentery:** Wash a daikon radish in water and slice thinly. Then add a suitable amount of vinegar and sugar to taste. Eat two times per day.

**High blood pressure:** 1. Dry stir-fry 500g of soybeans till fragrant. Then allow to cool and soak in 1000ml of vinegar for 10 days. Afterwards, eat the soybeans as one wants.

2. Soak unroasted peanuts in vinegar for seven days. Do not remove the shells. Then eat 10 peanuts each morning and night. This formula can also be used for arteriosclerosis and coronary artery disease.

**Arteriosclerosis:** Each day, drink one Tablespoon of vinegar.

**Angina pectoris:** Eat vinegar and garlic on a daily basis.

**Diabetes:** Wash 100g of soybeans in water. Then soak in 110ml of vinegar for eight days. Each three beans each time, 3-6 times per day. Constant eating gets the effect.

**Thyroid swelling:** Soak 60g of dried seaweed in a suitable amount of vinegar and eat regularly.

**Obesity:** Eat (or drink) 15-40ml of vinegar per day.

**Headache:** Boil some vinegar and inhale the fumes.

**Edema:** 1. Cook 60g of fresh ginger into soup with 100ml of vinegar and wash the affected limb with the resulting liquid once each day.  
2. Powder a suitable amount of mustard seed and mix with vinegar. Apply to the affected area.

**Insomnia:** Drink a bowl of hot water mixed with vinegar.

**Night sweats:** Each night before sleep, wash the chest and upper back with vinegar.

**Mouth sores (including thrush):** Stir-fry 15g of Fructus Evodiae Rutecarpae (*Wu Zhu Yu*). Then powder and mix into a paste with vinegar. Apply this paste once each evening before going to bed on the bottoms of the feet at *Yong Quan* (Ki 1).

**Gingivitis:** Mix 50ml of vinegar with 50ml of hot water and gargle with the resulting liquid two times per day for 14 days.

**Uterine bleeding:** Cook 150g of tofu with 100ml of vinegar. Eat once per day for 7-10 days.

**Vaginal candidiasis & itching:** Douche with 100ml of vinegar in 200ml of water once per day for 10 days.

**Nausea & vomiting during pregnancy:** Drink a Teaspoon of vinegar.

**Boils & other inflamed sores:** Mix mashed garlic and vinegar and apply to the affected area.

**Traumatic injuries:** Grind some mung beans into powder and mix with vinegar. Apply to the affected area. this can also be used for nonhealing lower limb sores, such as diabetic ulcers.

**Nosebleed:** Soak some sterile cotton in vinegar and insert into the nose.

**Flat warts:** Boil 200ml of vinegar down to 100ml and apply the resulting liquid to the warts three times per day.

**Common warts:** Mash a suitable amount of fresh ginger to obtain the juice. Then mix with a suitable amount of vinegar and apply several times per day to the warts.

**Palmar eczema:** Soak the hands for in warm vinegar for 10 minutes each time, two times per day.

**Parenchymyomycosis (fungal nails):** With a knife or scissors, cut off as much of the dead nail as possible. Then soak the affected nail in vinegar for 30 minutes once per day.

**Corns:** Soak a Chinese preserved plum (Fructus Pruni Mume, *Wu Mei*, or umeboshi) in a suitable amount of vinegar. Then apply to the corn once per day.

**Itching:** Mix some soy sauce and vinegar and apply to the affected area.

**Hives:** 1. Boil 60g of brown sugar and 30g of fresh ginger in 200ml of vinegar for five minutes. Then apply 20-30ml of the resulting liquid mixed with warm water 2-3 times per day.

2. Mix two parts vinegar to one part alcohol and apply to the affected area.

**Psoriasis:** Apply strong vinegar 3-4 times per day.

**Herpes zoster:** Mix vinegar and Realgar (*Xiong Huang*) together and apply externally to the herpes lesion once the blister has ruptured and there is a wet, glistening, slow-healing sore.

**Hair loss:** Mix 130ml of vinegar with 200ml of hot water and rinse the hair with this mixture, massaging it into the scalp, once per day on a regular basis.

**Body odor:** Soak five grams of fennel seeds in 50ml of vinegar. Then apply the resulting liquid to the underarms two times per day.

**Sweaty feet:** Boil 30g of Radix Sophorae Flavescentis (*Ku Shen*) and 20g of Fructus Zanthoxyli Bungeani (*Hua Jiao*, Sichuan peppercorns) in 50ml of aged vinegar. Apply the resulting liquid once each evening before going to bed. One should see an effect in 2-3 days and the full result in seven days.

**Foot odor:** Mix 15-20ml of vinegar in warm water and soak the feet for 15-20 minutes two times per day. Do continuously for 7-10 days and the foot odor can be eliminated.

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