**Li Zhōng Wán** *(Regulate the Middle Pill)*

- **Pinyin Name**: Li Zhong Wan
- **Literal Name**: Regulate the Middle Pill
- **Alternate Name**: Ginseng and Ginger Combination
- **Original Source**: *Shang Han Lun* (Discussion of Cold-Induced Disorders) by Zhang Zhong-Jing in the Eastern Han Dynasty

**COMPOSITION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gan Jiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis)</td>
<td>9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ren Shen (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng)</td>
<td>9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae)</td>
<td>9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhi Gan Cao (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle)</td>
<td>9g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DOSAGE / PREPARATION / ADMINISTRATION**

The source text recommends to grind the ingredients into powder and form into pills with honey. The pills should resemble egg yolk in size. Take 1 pill with warm water three times during the day and twice at night. If ingestion of the pills does not create a feeling of warmth in the abdomen, then this formula may also be given as a decoction.

**CHINESE THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS**

1. Warms the middle *jiao* and dispels cold
2. Tonifies qi and strengthens the Spleen and Stomach

**CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS**

1. Deficiency and cold of the middle *jiao*: absence of thirst, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, lack of appetite, and huo luan (sudden turmoil disorder).
2. Bleeding due to yang deficiency: epistaxis, hematochezia, shortness of breath, lassitude, and a fine pulse or a deficient, big pulse with little force.
3. Others: chronic infantile convulsions; and recovery from illness with drooling of saliva or excessive production of foamy saliva.

**CLINICAL APPLICATIONS**

Acute or chronic gastritis, gastric or duodenal ulcers, epigastric pain, gastropitosis, stomatitis, irritable bowel syndrome, gastroenteritis, enteritis, bacterial dysentery, colitis, uterine bleeding, nephropathy, male infertility, and excessive salivation.

**EXPLANATION**

*Li Zhong Wan* (Regulate the Middle Pill) treats deficiency and cold of the middle *jiao*, where the Spleen and Stomach are located. The Spleen, responsible for transportation and transformation, raises the clear yang. The Stomach, responsible for accepting and digesting food, lowers the turbid yin. If the middle *jiao* is deficient as a result of coldness, the ascending and descending functions of the Spleen and Stomach may be impaired, causing diarrhea and vomiting. Abdominal pain is due to the presence of coldness. Lack of appetite is the result of deficiency of the middle *jiao* and impaired digestive functioning.

To treat this syndrome, use herbs to warm the middle *jiao*, dispel coldness, tonify Spleen qi, and invigorate the digestive function. *Gan Jiang* (Rhizoma Zingiberis), the chief herb, warms the middle *jiao* and dispels interior cold. *Ren Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng) nourishes yuan (source) qi. *Bai Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) strengthens the Spleen and dries dampness. *Zhi Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle) nourishes qi and harmonizes the middle *jiao*.

*Li Zhong Wan* can also be used to treat blood loss due to Spleen yang deficiency; a deficient Spleen fails to keep...
Li Zhong Wan (Regulate the Middle Pill)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Signs and Symptoms</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Herbs</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Deficiency and cold of the middle jiao | • Diarrhea and vomiting: deficiency and cold of the middle jiao impairing the normal ascending and descending functions of the Spleen and Stomach  
• Abdominal pain: cold in the middle jiao | • Warms the middle jiao and dispels cold  
• Tonifies qi and strengthens the Spleen | • Gan Jiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis) warms the middle jiao and dispels interior cold.  
• Ren Shen (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng) nourishes yuan (source) qi.  
• Bai Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephala) strengthens the Spleen and dries dampness.  
• Zhi Gan Cao (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhiza Praeparata cum Melle) nourishes qi and harmonizes the middle jiao. |

**CAUTIONS / CONTRAINDICATIONS**

• **Li Zhong Wan** is contraindicated in patients of exterior wind invasion with fever.

• This formula contains many herbs that are warm and drying, and therefore is contraindicated in conditions characterized by interior heat with yin deficiency.

• This formula must be used with caution during pregnancy, as it contains many herbs that are warm and hot in nature.1

**PHARMACOLOGICAL EFFECTS**

1. **Antiulcer:** Li Zhong Wan has been shown to be beneficial in facilitating the healing of stomach ulcers. In one experiment, rats with artificially-induced ulcer were divided into herb and placebo groups. After 10 days of treatment, the herb group had only 3.57 mm² of ulceration, while the placebo group had 11.72 mm² of ulceration.2
Li Zhong Wān (Regulate the Middle Pill)

2. Adrenocortical: The preliminary data showed that administration of Li Zhong Wān was associated with a regulating effect on the adrenal glands.

3. Effect on kidney function: Administration of Li Zhong Wān was associated with a protective effect on kidney functions. In one study, continuous use of the formula for 1-3 months was effective in gradually reducing the amount of protein, cells, and blood urea nitrogen (BUN) in the urine.

CLINICAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH

1. Epigastric pain: Use of modified Li Zhong Wān was associated with marked relief in patients with epigastric pain characterized by deficiency and cold. The herbal treatment contained this formula plus Huang Qi (Radix Astragali), Fu Ling (Poria), Chen Pi (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae), and Cao Dou Kou (Semen Alpiniae Katsumadai). Additional modifications were made as follows: double the dose of Huang Qi (Radix Astragali) for qi deficiency; Rou Gui (Cortex Cinnamomi) and Fu Zi (Radix Aconiti Lateralis Praeparata) for presence of cold; Cang Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis) and Bai Bian Dou (Semen Lablab Album) for dampness; Dan Shen (Radix et Rhiza Salviae Miltiorrhizae), Yan Hu Suo (Rhizoma Corydalis), and Chuan Lian Zi (Fructus Toosendan) for stagnation; and Bei Sha Shen (Radix Glehniae), Bai Shao (Radix Paeoniae Alba), and Shan Yao (Rhizoma Dioscoreae) for yin deficiency. Of 30 patients, the study reported complete recovery in 5 patients within one month, and complete recovery in 20 patients and improvement in 5 patients within three months.

2. Gastritis: Thirty patients with various types of gastritis (atrophic gastritis, superficial gastritis, gastritis with ulcer) were treated with Li Zhong Wān. The study reported complete relief of pain in 25 patients and partial relief of pain in 5 patients. Seventeen showed improvement based on endoscopy, and 13 showed no significant changes.

3. Bacterial dysentery: Eighteen patients with chronic bacterial dysentery were treated with modification of Li Zhong Wān with complete recovery in 16 and improvement in 2 patients. The average duration of treatment was 12 days. The modification included addition of Huang Lian (Rhizoma Coptidis) and Fu Ling (Poria).

4. Enteritis: Thirty patients with acute or chronic enteritis with diarrhea were treated with Li Zhong Wān for 3-10 days with significant improvement in 18 patients, moderate improvement in 8 patients, and no effect in 4 patients. The study reported an overall effectiveness rate of 86.6%.

5. Renal insufficiency: Herbs were used to treat 15 patients (6 males and 9 females) with compromised kidney function, which included 12 patients of glomerulonephritis, polycystic kidney, kidney tuberculosis, and diabetic nephropathy. The herbal treatment included in extract 1.7 grams of Li Zhong Wān and 2.5 grams Da Huang Gan Cao Tang (Rhubarb and Licorice Decoction), given three times daily 30 minutes before meals for 3 months. The study reported an effectiveness rate of 66.7% after the first month, which was subsequently dropped to 40%. No significant side effects were reported. Note: Da Huang Gan Cao Tang (Rhubarb and Licorice Decoction) is not a commonly used formula, and is not discussed in detail in this text. The original source of this formula is Shang Han Lun (Discussion of Cold-Induced Disorders), with the following composition: Da Huang (Radix et Rhiza Zhei) 12g and Gan Cao (Radix et Rhiza Glycyrrhizae) 3g.

6. Male infertility: In one study, Li Zhong Wān and Ba Wei Di Huang Wān (Eight-Ingredient Pill with Rehmannia) were combined together to treat 10 patients with male infertility. The study reported an increased production of seminal fluid (from 2.73 mL to 3.28 mL), in sperm count (from 1170/mL to 2185/mL), and in sperm motility (from 29.0% to 35.5%).

7. Excessive salivation: Forty-two children (38 males and 4 females) with excessive salivation (20 days to 3 years history of illness) due to Spleen yang deficiency were treated with satisfactory results using modified Li Zhong Wān. The average age was 5.8 years (ranges from 3-9 years), and the average length of treatment was 4.6 packs of herbs in decoction. The herbs included Danshen (Radix Codonopsis) 10-18g, Yi Zhi (Fructus Alpiniae Oxyphyllae) 5-10g, Gan Jiang (Rhizoma Zingiberis) 5-8g, Gan Cao (Radix et Rhiza Glycyrrhizae) 4-6g, and Bai Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) 8-10g. Modifications were made by adding Sha Ren (Fructus Amomi) 4-6g and Ji Nei Jin (Endothelium Corneum Galli) 5-8g for poor appetite and loose stools accompanied by long-term excessive salivation; and the addition of Wu Mei (Fructus Mume) 10-18g, Shi Jun Zi (Fructus Quisqualis) 7-10g, and Hua Jiao (Pericarpium Zanthoxyli) 4-6g, and removal of Gan Cao (Radix et Rhiza Glycyrrhizae) for intestinal parasites with abdominal pain. After the treatment, 40 out of 42 patients showed complete recovery without any recurrence within 3 months.

8. Stomatitis: One study reported effectiveness using modified Li Zhong Wān to treat recurrent stomatitis in 106 patients (47 males and 59 females, between 1-72 years of age, with 3 months to 24 years history of illness). In addition to this formula, modifications were made as follows: replacing Ren Shen (Radix et Rhiza Zhei) with Dang Shen (Radix Codonopsis) for severe Spleen deficiency; addition of Rou Gui (Cortex Cinnamomi) for cold; and addition of Huang Lian (Rhizoma Coptidis) for heat. The study reported complete recovery in all 106 patients after 2-17 days of treatment.
**RELATED FORMULAS**

**Rén Shēn Tāng** (Ginseng Decoction)

*Ren Shen Tang*

**Pinyin Name:** Ren Shen Tang

**Literal Name:** Ginseng Decoction

**Alternate Name:** Li Zhong Tang (Regulate the Middle Decoction)

**Original Source:** *Jin Gui Yao Lue* (Essentials from the Golden Cabinet) by Zhang Zhong-Jing in the Eastern Han Dynasty

*Ren Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng) 9g  
*Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae) 9g  
*Gan Jiang* (Rhizoma Zingiberis) 9g  
*Bai Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) 9g

The source text states to cook the ingredients in 8 cups [1,600 mL] of water and reduce it to 3 cups [600 mL]. Take 1 cup [200 mL] of the warm, strained decoction three times daily. The source text also recommends taking 1 cup of hot porridge and keeping the body covered with a blanket to induce a feeling of warmth.

*Li Zhong Wan* and *Ren Shen Tang* (Ginseng Decoction) have essentially the same ingredients at the same dosages.

- *Li Zhong Wan* is administered in pill form, which is absorbed slowly over a longer period of time to warm the middle *jiao*, disperse cold, and tonify Spleen and Stomach qi.
- *Ren Shen Tang* (Ginseng Decoction) is administered in decoction form, which is absorbed immediately to provide a faster onset of action. This formula is primarily used to treat a more urgent condition, such as *xiong bi* (painful obstruction of the chest) with symptoms such as cold extremities, fatigue, low energy, and feeble voice.

**AUTHORS’ COMMENTS**

*Li Zhong Wan* is one of the main formulas for treating deficiency and cold of the Spleen and Stomach. This formula was originally designed to be given as pills, which usually have a slower onset of action. When necessary in acute or severe cases, this formula may first be given in decoction form, and then followed by pills when the condition stabilizes.

*Li Zhong Wan* and *Si Jun Zi Tang* (Four-Gentlemen Decoction) both treat Spleen qi deficiency with poor appetite, diarrhea, and other signs and symptoms. Both formulas contain qi-tonifying herbs such as *Ren Shen* (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng), *Bai Zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), and *Zhi Gan Cao* (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle). Despite these similarities, the differences are as follows:

- *Li Zhong Wan* is for deficiency with cold of the middle *jiao* (Spleen and Stomach), characterized by abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, polyuria, cold limbs, intolerance to cold, and a deep, fine pulse.
- *Si Jun Zi Tang* is for Spleen qi deficiency, characterized by a sallow complexion, poor appetite, decreased dietary intake, fatigue, a pale tongue body, and a fine, moderate pulse.

*Li Zhong Hua Tan Wan* (Regulate the Middle and Transform Phlegm Pill) is composed of *Li Zhong Wan* plus *Fu Ling* (Poria) and *Ban Xia* (Rhizoma Pinelliae), which are used in this formula to enhance the action of tonifying Spleen qi and dissolving phlegm. Clinically, the patient may show deficiency and cold of the Spleen and Stomach with stagnation of phlegm. The symptoms include nausea, vomiting, lack of appetite, loose stools, poor digestion, coughing with sputum, and drooling of saliva.

In comparison to *Li Zhong Wan*, *Li Zhong Hua Tan Wan* has a stronger action to dry dampness, strengthen the Spleen, and relieve nausea. Therefore, it is often used for patients who have deficiency and cold of the Spleen and Stomach, complicated by coughing with sputum and drooling of saliva.
**Li Zhōng Wán** (Regulate the Middle Pill)

**References**

**Fù Zǐ Lì Zhōng Wán** (Prepared Aconite Pill to Regulate the Middle)

**Pinyin Name:** Fu Zi Li Zhong Wan  
**Literal Name:** Prepared Aconite Pill to Regulate the Middle  
**Alternate Names:** Fu Tsu Li Chung Tang (Wan), Fu Zi Li Zhong Tang (Wan), Aconite, Ginseng and Ginger Decoction (Pill); Aconite Middle-Regulating Decoction (Pill); Aconite Ginseng and Ginger Combination  
**Original Source:** Tai Ping Hui Min He Ji Ju Fang (Imperial Grace Formulary of the Tai Ping Era) by the Imperial Medical Department in 1078-85

**COMPOSITION**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fu Zi</strong> (Radix Aconiti Lateralis Praeparata), pao (blast-fried)</td>
<td>90g [9g]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gan Jiang</strong> (Rhizoma Zingiberis), pao (blast-fried)</td>
<td>90g [9g]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ren Shen</strong> (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng)</td>
<td>90g [9g]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bai Zhu</strong> (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), cuo (grated)</td>
<td>90g [9g]</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Zhi Gan Cao</strong> (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae Praeparata cum Melle)</td>
<td>90g [9g]</td>
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</table>

**DOSAGE / PREPARATION / ADMINISTRATION**
The source text states to grind the ingredients into a fine powder and form into pills with honey. Each pill should weigh 3 grams. Place and disintegrate 1 pill in one bowl of water, then cook it until 70% of the liquid remains. Take the warm decoction before meals on an empty stomach. For children, divide the decoction into two to three separate doses. This formula may also be prepared as a decoction with the doses suggested in brackets.

**CHINESE THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS**
1. Warms yang and dispels cold  
2. Tonifies qi and strengthens the Spleen

**CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS**
Deficiency and cold of the Spleen and Stomach: extreme coldness of the body and the extremities, mild perspiration, indigestion, borborygmus, severe epigastric and abdominal fullness and pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and sudden turmoil disorder with muscle spasms.

**CLINICAL APPLICATIONS**
Gastroenteritis, gastritis, peptic ulcer disease, gastroatonia, prolapse of the stomach, ulcerative colitis, and infantile diarrhea.

**EXPLANATION**
*Fu Zi Li Zhong Wan* (Prepared Aconite Pill to Regulate the Middle) combines *Fu Zi* (Radix Aconiti Lateralis Praeparata) and *Li Zhong Wan* (Regulate the Middle Pill). It warms yang, dispels cold, benefits qi, and strengthens the Spleen. It is used for deficiency and cold secondary to yang deficiency of the Spleen and Stomach. Clinically, patients may show vomiting, diarrhea, muscle spasms, muscle stiffness in the extremities, and a white tongue coating.