Xiăo Chéng Qì T āng (Minor Order the Qi Decoction)

小承氣湯

Pinyin Name: Xiao Cheng Qi Tang
Literal Name: Minor Order the Qi Decoction
Alternate Names: Hsiao Cheng Chi Tang, Minor Qi-Infusing Decoction, Minor Purgative Decoction, Minor Rhubarb 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Da Huang (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei), xi (washed) with liquor</td>
<td>12g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hou Po (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis), zhi (fried with liquid)</td>
<td>6g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhi Shi (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus), zhi (fried with liquid)</td>
<td>3 large pieces [9g]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DOSAGE / PREPARATION / ADMINISTRATION

Cook the ingredients with 4 cups [800 mL] of water until reduced to 1.2 cups [240 mL]. Take the warm, strained decoction in two equally-divided doses twice daily.

CHINESE THERAPEUTIC ACTIONS

Gently drains heat and accumulation downward

CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

1. Excess yangming fu (hollow organs) syndrome: constipation, delirium, tidal fever, fullness and distention of the chest and abdomen, a yellow tongue coating that is old- and dirty-looking in appearance, and a rapid, slippery pulse.
2. Early stage of dysentery with rectal tenesmus, and epigastriac and abdominal distention and pain.

CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

Constipation, post-operotive constipation, acute simple intestinal obstruction, intestinal paralysis, absence of intestinal peristalsis, abdominal distention and pain, chronic gastritis, acute gastroenteritis, viral hepatitis, acute cholecystitis, acute appendicitis, acute febrile disease, hypertension, obesity, and food intoxication.

EXPLANATION

Xiăo Chéng Qì T āng (Minor Order the Qi Decoction) treats yangming fu (hollow organs) syndrome of moderate severity, characterized by the presence of pi (distention), man (fullness), and shi (hardness). However, there is no zao (dryness). Da Huang (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei), the chief herb, clears heat in the Stomach and Intestines and purges constipated stools. Hou Po (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis) and Zhi Shi (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) regulate qi flow to relieve fullness and distention, and activate qi circulation to help dispel heat and stagnant stools.

Xiăo Chéng Qì T āng is a variation of Da Cheng Qi Tang (Major Order the Qi Decoction), and basically has the same purgative effect, except that it is a milder formula for yangming fu (hollow organs) syndrome of moderate severity. Therefore, it is not necessary to post-decoct Da Huang (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei), as in Da Cheng Qi Tang (Major Order the Qi Decoction). Instead, Da Huang (Radix et Rhizoma Rhei) is fully cooked to moderate its potent downward draining effects. Additionally, the doses of Hou Po (Cortex Magnoliae Officinalis) and Zhi Shi (Fructus Aurantii Immaturus) are decreased, since the condition is not as severe. Lastly, Mang Xiao (Natrii Sulphas) is not used since there is an absence of zao (dryness).

MODIFICATIONS

• If there is generalized weakness and qi deficiency, add Huang Qi (Radix Astragali) and Ren Shen (Radix et Rhizoma Ginseng).
• If there is generalized weakness and blood deficiency, add Dang Gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) and Chuan Xiong (Rhizoma Chuanxiong).
• When there is irritability and restlessness as a result of Lung deficiency, add Mai Dong (Radix Ophiopogonis) and Wu Wei Zi (Fructus Schisandraceae Chinensis).
• For tonsillitis, add Shan Dou Gen (Radix et Rhizoma Sophorae Tonkinensis) and Jie Geng (Radix Platycodonis).

CAUTIONS / CONTRAINDICATIONS

Refer to Da Cheng Qi Tang (Major Order the Qi Decoction).

PHARMACOLOGICAL EFFECTS

1. Gastrointestinal: Administration of Xiao Cheng Qi Tang was associated with increased contraction and peristalsis. The mechanism of action was attributed to the stimulating effect on the smooth muscles of the intestines.\(^1\)\(^2\)
2. Antibiotic: Administration of Xiao Cheng Qi Tang was associated with an inhibitory effect \textit{in vitro} against \textit{Staphylococcus aureus} and \textit{E. coli}. Also, the inhibitory effect of the formula was determined to be stronger than the individual ingredients.\(^3\)
**Clinical Studies and Research**

1. **Gastrointestinal disorders**: Xiao Cheng Qi Tang has been shown in many studies to treat various types of gastrointestinal disorders, such as post-operative constipation, intestinal paralysis, absence of intestinal peristalsis, abdominal distention and pain, etc.  

2. **Post-operative constipation**: Eighty-six geriatric patients were treated with modified Xiao Cheng Qi Tang for prevention and treatment of post-operative constipation. The first dose of the formula was given 48 hours after the surgery, and the second dose was given 6 hours later (54 hours after the surgery) only if necessary. The study reported 100% success rate, with 53 patients showing gas or bowel movement after the first dose, and the remaining 33 patients after the second dose.  

3. **Chronic gastritis**: Use of modified Xiao Cheng Qi Tang was associated with 96.36% effectiveness in the treatment of chronic gastritis in 55 patients.  

4. **Acute gastroenteritis**: Modified Xiao Cheng Qi Tang effectively treated acute gastroenteritis in 91 patients (49 males and 42 females) between 1 and 5 years of age, with 1-3 days history of illness. The study reported immediate improvement in 16 cases, significant improvement in 42 cases, moderate improvement in 26 cases, and no benefit in 9 cases. The overall rate of effectiveness was 92.3%. The herbal treatment used Xiao Cheng Qi Tang plus charred Shan Zha (Fructus Crataegi) and charred Shen Qu (Massa Fermentata) as the base formula. Mu Xiang (Radix Acori) was added for abdominal pain; Lian Qiao (Fructus Forsythiae), and Bo He (Herba Menthae) were added for fever; Sha Ren (Fructus Amomi), Huang Lian (Rhizoma Coptidis), and Ban Xiu (Rhizoma Pinelliae) were added for recurrent nausea and vomiting. The herbs were given one time daily in decoction.  

5. **Viral hepatitis**: Administration of modified Xiao Cheng Qi Tang effectively treated 39 of 40 patients with viral hepatitis. Of those who responded to the treatment, none had recurrence during the follow-up exam one year later. All patients received two courses of treatment, with 15 days per course. The herbal treatment contained Xiao Cheng Qi Tang plus Gan Cao (Radix et Rhizoma Glycyrrhizae) as the base formula. Additionally, Cang Zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis) was added for dampness; and charred Shan Zha (Fructus Crataegi) and charred Ji Nei Jin (Endothelium Corneum Gigeriae Galli) were added for indigestion. Pharmaceutical drugs were added as supportive treatment when necessary.  

**Herb-Drug Interaction**

Opioid-induced constipation and nausea: One study reported marked effectiveness using Xiao Cheng Qi Tang to relieve constipation and nausea caused by excessive use of opioid analgesics in 40 patients with terminal cancer. For constipation, the study reported complete recovery in 30 cases, improvement in 8 cases, and no benefit in 2 cases. For nausea, the study reported complete relief in 19 cases and improvement in 9 cases.  

**Authors’ Comments**

Please refer to Da Cheng Qi Tang (Major Order the Qi Decoction) for a detailed comparison with Xiao Cheng Qi Tang and Xiao Wei Cheng Qi Tang (Regulate the Stomach and Order the Qi Decoction).

**References**