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Treating Infants and Small Children With Chinese Herbal Medicine

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Chinese herbal medicine is very effective for infants and small children, yet many acupuncture/TCM practitioners remain wary of treating children. This is in contrast to naturopaths, who enter the healing arts confident and optimistic about treating all members of the family.

In China, pediatrics is a TCM specialty, attracting many of the best and the brightest. Some concentrate on pediatric tuina massage for infants; others specialize in herbal medicine. I would like to see more American TCM practitioners train in treatments for infants and children. In fact, such training is available through the Holistic Pediatric Association, which offers a good TCM concentration (available online at www.hpakids.org). Treating children is particularly rewarding. They recover quickly and predictably, especially in contrast to geriatric patients. Children's qi and yang helps their recovery, and the practitioner develops a confidence and optimism in their practice.

In the main, formulas used for children are the same as those used for adults. That is to say, children do not require special formulas for common conditions. Determining the correct syndrome differentiation is important. There are certain points one considers in giving herbs to infants and toddlers. Avoid very strong herbs, such as herbs that are too pungent, bitter, warming, cooling or moving. A gentler approach is usually successful.

Also, it is recommended that in acute conditions with infants and toddlers, one can discontinue the treatment as soon as



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improvement is noticed. Momentum should take the child to complete recovery.

Dosing considerations: Dosing can be done by age. Whether giving powder, liquid or pills, the Chinese texts make these recommendations:

- * Newborns: 1/6 adult dosage
- * Babies: 1/3 - 1/2 adult dosage
- * Young children (ages 2 to 5): 1/2 - 2/3 adult dosage
- * School children: same as adults

Normally, I take a prepared patent medicine (or two) and grind it in an electric coffee grinder. I then return the powder to the original bottle or a plastic zip bag. Or, one can use a Taiwan-style extracted granule powder.