

# Natural Harmony Clinic

## TIAN JIU- External Therapy for Allergies

Dr Jenny LI

Tianjiu, also called “FujiTianjiu, also called “Fujiu,” refers to “applying moxibustion (heat treatment) in summer” and is a replacement for needling acupuncture. Tianjiu is a non-invasive therapy in which a processed Chinese herbal paste is placed on a sticky patch and then applied to specific acupuncture points on the body. It is designed to open the pores and promote the circulation of energy and blood, thus harmonizing the visceral aspects of the body through the channel system.

Tianjiu was first recorded in 1695 in the classic Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) text *General Medicine According to Master Zhang*, and is the earliest known method for the treatment of recurring illnesses. TCM practitioners at that time used Tianjiu to treat asthma and chronic bronchitis. In some texts, it is recorded as “Dong Bing Xia Zhi,” which means “treating winter diseases in summer,” because the majority of respiratory diseases, including asthma, are considered “winter” diseases in TCM, as they are more likely to manifest as acute attacks during the cold winter months.

The application of a targeted herbal plaster to the skin surface is considered comparable to vaccination in that it may supply antihistamine and anti-inflammatory effects, thus helping to protect against further outbreaks of disease. The concept behind Tianjiu in Chinese Medicine is to provide the patient with positive heat energy. In the case of respiratory diseases and associated allergies such as rhinitis, the application of the herbal paste occurs at a specific time in summer or winter. At other times of the year, if the patient is experiencing acute attacks, needle acupuncture may be used to relieve acute symptoms, while herbal concoctions may be taken orally to provide further relief. When the appropriate time for Tianjiu occurs, the herbal paste is applied to address the underlying cause of the illness. This approach has been reported to be highly effective in the treatment of asthma.

After hundreds of years of clinical use in TCM, a great wealth of experience with Tianjiu has accumulated. In recent decades, numerous scientific studies have demonstrated the efficacy of Tianjiu in alleviating pain and improving allergy-related symptoms. Common applications of Tianjiu now include allergies and chronic health conditions such as:

- Rhinitis
- Asthma and wheezing
- Hay fever

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- Persistent coughing
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Eczema
- Period pain (primary dysmenorrhea)
- Weakened immune response

Despite the gentle process of applying herbal patches to the skin, Tianjiu is believed to help restore the body to balance and improve these conditions. Its positive effects may be due to the dual impact of acupoint stimulation and the medicinal action of the herbs in the plaster. By causing redness (regarded as a sign of heat), congestion, or even blistering at the treatment site, which subsequently heals completely, Tianjiu may strengthen the body, rebalance the immune system, and reduce symptoms associated with allergies and pain.

Among people with respiratory conditions, those with biomarkers indicating abnormal IgE and eosinophil (Eos) levels, as well as impaired or reduced pulmonary function, have shown significant improvement in clinical trials using Tianjiu as part of an Asthma Control Test protocol, compared with control groups.

In addition to being a very safe and non-invasive form of treatment, Tianjiu is particularly valuable for paediatric conditions due to its method of application. This is because it does not utilize pharmaceutical drugs and therefore is considered less likely to interfere with the body's natural internal environment and the child's development. It is also effective, low-cost, and easy to perform.

A typical course of Tianjiu consists of three sessions, each nine days apart. In the case of respiratory diseases, there is a particular calculation based on the lunar calendar that determines when Tianjiu should be performed. This commonly occurs around the Winter Solstice (22 June in the Southern Hemisphere) and the Summer Solstice (22 December in the Southern Hemisphere). For other conditions, including period pain, irritable bowel syndrome, and other chronic health issues, there is no fixed day or season prescribed, as only respiratory allergies are considered to have a strong seasonal correlation.

In preparation for treatment, several Chinese herbs are finely ground and mixed with ginger juice to form a paste. The paste is then applied to clean skin and covered with a plaster. The plaster is typically left on for 4–6 hours for adults and 1–2 hours for children. After removal, if stinging, redness, or blistering is present, the desired Tianjiu reaction for that year is considered to have been achieved.

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However, if no reaction occurs, a second and possibly third treatment may be applied until signs of the therapeutic reaction appear. If no change occurs after three Tianjiu sessions, this may reflect a weak constitution or the severity and duration of the disease. In such cases, it may be necessary to repeat Tianjiu treatment over the following two or three years.

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