

CHAPTER 12

Herpes Zoster

Herpes zoster is also known as shingles. According to Western medicine, it is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. But in herpes zoster, the virus gives rise to an inflammation of the sensory ganglia of spinal and cranial nerves. This disease starts with pain along the distribution of a nerve in the face, chest, or abdomen, and later there are eruptions of fluid-filled blisters on the area of skin along the distribution of the affected nerve. The afflicted area is extremely sensitive and painful.

There are four main forms:

- liver-gallbladder exuberant heat [肝胆热盛 *gān dǎn rè shèng*]
- damp-heat in the spleen channel [脾经湿热 *pí jīng shī rè*]
- qì stagnation and blood stasis [气滞血瘀 *qì zhì xuè yū*]
- yīn depletion blood stagnation [阴亏血滞 *yīn kuī xuè zhì*]

12.1 POINTS OF ATTENTION FOR HERPES ZOSTER

12.1.1 Pathomechanism

The disease often starts out as a damp-heat pattern and later develops qì-blood stagnation. The pathological changes occur in the liver and spleen. Possible causes are:

- affect-mind internal damage [情志内伤 *qíng zhì nèi shāng*] that gives rise to liver-gallbladder fire
- eating too many spicy, greasy, and/or sweet foods that engender damp-heat
- spleen vacuity that gives rise to dampness which, after enduring depression, transforms into heat

- Liver fire and damp-heat bind and obstruct the channels and network vessels, causing stoppage of qi-blood and pain. While herpes zoster has a damp-heat pathomechanism, it is important to establish whether damp or heat is more pronounced.

Pathomechanism of the Skin Symptoms

Heat-toxin brewing in the blood aspect [血分 *xuè fēn*] is responsible for red patches on the skin. When vacuous spleen does not move dampness, water accumulates in the skin and damp-heat congealing is responsible for the fluid-filled blisters.

12.2 CAUSES AND PATHOMECHANISM OF HERPES ZOSTER; IDENTIFYING PATTERNS

12.2.1 Liver-Gallbladder Exuberant Heat [肝胆热盛 *gān dǎn rè shèng*]

Causes and Pathomechanism of Liver-Gallbladder Exuberant Heat

This pattern may result from emotional disharmony impeding the liver's function of free coursing [疏泄 *shū xiè*]; in this case, liver depression transforms into fire [肝郁化火 *gān yù huà huǒ*] and gives rise to liver-gallbladder fire. Another possibility is toxin evil [毒邪 *dú xié*] assailing the interior, which intensifies the damp-heat brewing in the liver and gallbladder. Here, damp-heat congests in the skin and forms fluid-filled blisters. In this pattern, heat is more pronounced than dampness.

Important Signs of Liver-Gallbladder Exuberant Heat

Red skin, eruption of tight, fluid-filled blisters. Scorching hot pain [灼热痛 *zhuó rè tòng*] or itching of the affected skin. Bitter taste in the mouth, dry throat. Dry stool. The tongue is red with yellow fur [舌质红苔黄 *shé zhì hóng tāi huáng*]. Stringlike rapid pulse [脉弦数 *mài xián shuò*].

12.2.2 Damp-Heat in the Spleen Channel [脾经湿热 *pí jīng shī rè*]

Causes and Pathomechanism of Damp-Heat in the Spleen Channel

Damp-heat in the spleen channel results from eating too many spicy, greasy, sweet, and/or rich foods that damage the spleen and impair its function of movement and transformation [运化 *yùn huà*]. This causes water-damp to collect and, after prolonged brewing [蕴 *yùn*], transform into heat. The result is damp-heat binding internally that obstructs the channels and network vessels. In this pattern, damp is more pronounced than heat.

Important Signs of Damp-Heat in the Spleen Channel

Eruption of soft fluid-filled blisters that burst easily. Pain is not severe. Torpid intake [纳呆 *nà dāi*], distention in the abdomen. Dry stool. Yellow slimy tongue fur [舌苔黄腻 *shé tāi huáng nì*]. Soggy slippery or slippery rapid pulse [脉濡滑或滑数 *mài rú huá huò huá shuò*].

12.2.3 Qi Stagnation and Blood Stasis [气滞血瘀 *qì zhì xuè yū*]

Causes and Pathomechanism of Qi Stagnation and Blood Stasis

After herpes zoster has endured for a long time, enduring liver depression [肝郁 *gān yù*] can result in qi stagnation and blood stasis. In short, this pattern is the development of another pattern.

Important Signs of Qi Stagnation and Blood Stasis

Often seen in old people. Severe pain persists even after the fluid-filled blisters heal. There may be oppression in the chest [胸闷 *xiōng mèn*] and frequent sighing. Dark purple tongue, thin fur [舌质紫, 苔薄 *shé zhì zǐ, tāi bó*]. Rough or stringlike pulse [脉涩或弦 *mài sè huò xián*].

12.2.4 Yin Depletion Blood Stagnation [阴亏血滞 *yīn kuī xuè zhì*]

Causes and Pathomechanism of Yin Depletion Blood Stagnation

After herpes zoster has endured for a long time, it may also progressively damage yīn. When yīn is depleted the liver channel is not properly nourished, which results in dull pain [隐痛 *yīn tòng*].

Important Signs of Yin Depletion Blood Stagnation

After the fluid-filled blisters heal there is dull or stabbing pain in the rib-side and chest. Dry mouth and throat. The tongue has peeling fur or scant liquid [苔花剥或少津 *tāi huā bō huò shǎo jīn*]. Stringlike and thin pulse [脉弦细 *mài xián xì*].

12.3 TREATMENT OF HERPES ZOSTER USING CHINESE MEDICINALS

12.3.1 Liver-Gallbladder Exuberant Heat [肝胆热盛 *gān dǎn rè shèng*]

Method of Treatment for Liver-Gallbladder Exuberant Heat

Drain liver-gallbladder repletion fire, disinhibit triple burner damp-heat [泻肝胆实火, 利三焦湿热 *xiè gān dǎn shí huǒ, lì sān jiāo shī rè*].

Gentian Liver-Draining Decoction [龙胆泻肝汤 <i>lóng dǎn xiè gān tāng</i>]	
gentian [龙胆草 <i>lóng dǎn cǎo</i> , Gentianae Radix]	6g
bupleurum [柴胡 <i>chái hú</i> , Bupleuri Radix]	6g
alisma [泽泻 <i>zé xiè</i> , Alismatis Rhizoma]	12g
plantago seed [车前子 <i>chē qián zǐ</i> , Plantaginis Semen]	9g
trifoliate akebia [木通 <i>mù tōng</i> , Akebiae Trifoliatae Caulis]	9g
dried/fresh rehmannia [生地黄 <i>shēng dì huáng</i> , Rehmanniae Radix seu Recens]	9g
Chinese angelica [当归 <i>dāng guī</i> , Angelicae Sinensis Radix]	3g
gardenia [栀子 <i>zhī zǐ</i> , Gardeniae Fructus]	9g
scutellaria [黄芩 <i>huáng qín</i> , Scutellariae Radix]	9g
licorice [甘草 <i>gān cǎo</i> , Glycyrrhizae Radix]	6g
Directions: Take decocted with water [水煎服 <i>shuǐ jiān fú</i>].	

Prescription Analysis

Chief Medicinal

Gentian, which is extremely bitter and cold, is used to clear and drain liver-gallbladder repletion fire and to clear and disinhibit lower burner damp-heat.

Support Medicinals

The bitter and cold properties of scutellaria and gardenia drain fire [泻火 *xiè huǒ*] and help the chief medicinal to clear and drain liver-gallbladder repletion heat.

Assistant Medicinals

Alisma, trifoliate akebia, and plantago seed clear heat and disinhibit dampness as well as conduct fire out through the urine [引火从小便而出 *yǐn huǒ cóng xiǎo biàn ér chū*].

The liver stores blood [肝藏血 *gān cáng xuè*]. Therefore, heat in the liver easily damages yīn-blood. This is why the prescription uses Chinese angelica to supplement and quicken blood and dried/fresh rehmannia to nourish blood and boost yīn [养血益阴 *yǎng xuè yì yīn*]. Bupleurum courses liver-gallbladder depression [疏肝胆郁滞 *shū gān dǎn yù zhì*].

Licorice [*gān cǎo*] harmonizes the actions of all the other medicinals.

Using this combination of medicinals effectively supplements within draining [泻中有补 *xiè zhōng yǒu bǔ*] and nourishes within clearing [清中有养 *qīng zhōng yǒu yǎng*]. When liver-gallbladder repletion fire is drained, liver channel damp-heat is cleared, blood is nourished, and yīn is boosted.

Variation According to Signs

If the patient shows signs of vigorous heat [壮热 *zhuàng rè*], add crude gypsum [生石膏 *shēng shí gāo*]. If the patient also suffers from constipation, add rhubarb [大黄 *dà huáng*]. For localized severe pain, add frankincense [乳香 *rǔ xiāng*] and myrrh [没药 *mò yào*]. If the upper extremities are involved, add turmeric [姜黄 *jiāng huáng*] and cinnamon twig [桂枝 *guì zhī*]. If the face is involved, add arctium [牛蒡子 *niú bàng zǐ*] and wild chrysanthemum flower [野菊花 *yě jú huā*].

12.3.2 Damp-Heat in the Spleen Channel [脾经湿热 *pí jīng shī rè*]**Method of Treatment for Damp-Heat in the Spleen Channel**

Fortify the spleen and disinhibit dampness [健脾利湿 *jiàn pí lì shī*].

Dampness-Eliminating Stomach-Calming Poria Five Decoction [除湿胃苓汤 <i>chú shī wèi líng tāng</i>]	
atractylodes [苍术 <i>cāng zhú</i> , Atractylodis Rhizoma]	10g
white atractylodes [白术 <i>bái zhú</i> , Atractylodis Macrocephalae Rhizoma]	10g
officinal magnolia bark [厚朴 <i>hòu pò</i> , Magnoliae Officinalis Cortex]	9g
tangerine peel [陈皮 <i>chén pí</i> , Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium]	9g
poria [茯苓 <i>fú líng</i> , Poria]	12g
polyporus [猪苓 <i>zhū líng</i> , Polyporus]	15g
talcum [滑石 <i>huá shí</i> , Talcum]	15g
trifoliate akebia [木通 <i>mù tōng</i> , Akebiae Trifoliatae Caulis]	6g
licorice [甘草 <i>gān cǎo</i> , Glycyrrhizae Radix]	3g
Directions: Take decocted with water [水煎服 <i>shuǐ jiān fú</i>].	

Prescription Analysis**Chief Medicinals**

Atractylodes and white atractylodes dry dampness and fortify the spleen [燥湿健脾 *zào shī jiàn pí*], thus treating the root [治本 *zhì běn*].

Support Medicinals

Poria and polyporus disinhibit water and percolate dampness [利水渗湿 *lì shuǐ shèn shī*] to help the chief medicinals dispel dampness.

Assistant Medicinals

When qì moves then water also moves [气行则水行 *qì xíng zé shuǐ xíng*]; thus, the prescription uses tangerine peel and officinal magnolia bark to move qì and loosen the center [宽中 *kuān zhōng*].

Talcum and trifoliate akebia disinhibit the bladder to dispel dampness.

Licorice harmonizes the properties of all the medicinals [调和药性 *tiáo hé yào xìng*].

This combination of medicinals fortifies the spleen and disinhibits dampness. When damp evil is dispelled, all symptoms will disappear.

Variation According to Signs

If damp evil is severe and there are many vesicles, add agastache [*huò xiāng*], eupatorium [*pèi lán*], areca husk [*dà fù pí*], and plantago seed [*chē qián zǐ*] to reinforce the damp-dispelling action. If the heat toxin is extreme, add lonicera [*jīn yín huā*], gardenia [*zhī zǐ*], smooth greenbrier root [*tǔ fù líng*], and moutan [*mǔ dān pí*] to clear heat, cool blood, and resolve toxin.

12.3.3 Qi Stagnation and Blood Stasis [气滞血瘀 *qì zhì xuè yū*]

Method of Treatment for Qi Stagnation and Blood Stasis

Course the liver and rectify qi, quicken blood and check pain [疏肝理气, 活血止痛 *shū gān lǐ qì, huó xuè zhǐ tòng*].

Bupleurum Liver-Coursing Powder [柴胡疏肝散 <i>chái hú shū gān sǎn</i>]	
bupleurum [柴胡 <i>chái hú</i> , Bupleuri Radix]	6g
tangerine peel [陈皮 <i>chén pí</i> , Citri Reticulatae Pericarpium]	6g
white peony [白芍 <i>bái sháo</i> , Paeoniae Radix Alba]	5g
bitter orange [枳壳 <i>zhǐ ké</i> , Aurantii Fructus]	5g
chuanxiong [川芎 <i>chuān xiōng</i> , Chuanxiong Rhizoma]	5g
cyperus [香附 <i>xiāng fù</i> , Cyperi Rhizoma]	5g
honey-fried licorice [炙甘草 <i>zhì gān cǎo</i> , Glycyrrhizae Radix Preparata]	2g
Directions: Take decocted with water [水煎服 <i>shuǐ jiān fú</i>].	

Prescription Analysis

Chief Medicinals

Bupleurum courses the liver and resolves depression; chuanxiong quickens blood and checks pain. Both medicinals treat the root [治本 *zhì běn*].

Support Medicinals

Tangerine peel and bitter orange help the chief medicinals rectify qi and loosen the chest [宽胸 *kuān xiōng*], while white peony helps the chief medicinals regulate blood [调血 *tiáo xuè*].

Assistant Medicinals

Cyperus is one of the main medicinals for qì diseases and has an important function in gynecological diseases. It rectifies qì and regulates blood.

Honey-fried licorice and white peony make up Peony and Licorice Decoction [芍药甘草汤 *sháo yào gān cǎo tāng*], which relaxes tension and checks pain [缓急止痛 *huǎn jí zhǐ tòng*]. Honey-fried licorice also harmonizes the properties of all the medicinals [调和药性 *tiáo hé yào xìng*].

This combination of medicinals is effectively used to course the liver and rectify qì and to quicken blood and check pain.

Variation According to Signs

Bupleurum Liver-Coursing Powder is effective for moving qì and coursing the liver, but its power to quicken blood and check pain might be insufficient for this pattern. For such cases, add peach kernel [*táo rén*], carthamus [*hóng huā*], moutan [*mǔ dān pí*], red peony [*chì sháo*], and corydalis [*yán hú suǒ*] to improve the blood-quicken and pain-checking actions.

12.3.4 Yīn Depletion Blood Stagnation [阴亏血滞 *yīn kuī xuè zhì*]**Method of Treatment for Yīn Depletion Blood Stagnation**

Enrich yīn and quicken blood [滋阴活血 *zī yīn huó xuè*].

All-the-Way-Through Brew [一贯煎 *yī guàn jiān*]

glehnia [北沙参 <i>běi shā shēn</i> , Glehniae Radix]	10g
ophiopogon [麦冬 <i>mài dōng</i> , Ophiopogonis Radix]	10g
dried/fresh rehmannia [生地黄 <i>shēng dì huáng</i> , Rehmanniae Radix seu Recens]	30g
lycium berry [枸杞子 <i>gǒu qǐ zǐ</i> , Lycii Fructus]	12g
toosendan [川楝子 <i>chuān liàn zǐ</i> , Toosendan Fructus]	5g

Directions: Take decocted with water [水煎服 *shuǐ jiān fú*].

Prescription Analysis**Chief Medicinal**

Dried/fresh rehmannia strongly enriches and supplements liver and kidney yīn.

Support Medicinals

Glehnia, ophiopogon, and lycium berry help the chief medicinal enrich and supplement yīn.

Assistant Medicinal

Toosendan drains fire, courses the liver, and checks pain [泻火疏肝止痛 *xiè huǒ shū gān zhǐ tòng*].

This combination of medicinals enriches yīn and courses the liver.

Variation According to Signs

The strength of All-the-Way-Through Brew lies in enriching yīn and coursing the liver. Its power to quicken blood is comparatively lacking, so if there are strong signs of blood stagnation, add peach kernel [*táo rén*], carthamus [*hóng huā*], and chuanxiong [*chuān xiōng*]. If the blood stagnation is severe, further add pangolin scales [*chuān shān jiǎ*], vaccaria [*wáng bù liú xíng*], sparganium [*sān léng*], and curcuma rhizome [*é zhú*] to improve the ability to quicken blood, transform stasis, and check pain. If there is blood stagnation with heat, add red peony [*chì sháo*], moutan [*mǔ dān pī*], and puccoon [*zī cǎo*] to clear heat and to cool and quicken blood [清热凉血活血 *qīng rè liáng xuè huó xuè*].

12.4 ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT FOR HERPES ZOSTER**12.4.1 Base Acupuncture Prescription for Herpes Zoster**

This base prescription should be modified according to the identified patterns that are discussed below and according to the condition of the individual patient.

Treatment Method for Herpes Zoster

Dispel evil and check pain [祛邪止痛 *qū xié zhǐ tòng*].

Base Acupuncture Prescription for Herpes Zoster

Select points for local bloodletting
(i.e., network vessel pricking [局部刺络放血 *jù bù cì luò fàng xuè*])

Prescription Analysis

Local bloodletting makes evil toxins [邪毒 *xié dú*] that are accumulated in the skin drain [泻 *xiè*] out of the body along with the blood. Thus, the procedure dispels evil toxins and checks pain [止痛 *zhǐ tòng*].

12.4.2 Points to Add to the Base Prescription**Points for Liver-Gallbladder Exuberant Heat [肝胆热盛 *gān dǎn rè shèng*]**

TB-6 Branch Ditch [支沟 *zhī gōu*]
GB-34 Yang Mound Spring [阳陵泉 *yáng líng quán*]

TB-6 and GB-34 are used to course the liver and gallbladder and to clear heat and disinhibit dampness [疏泄肝胆, 清热利湿 *shū xiè gān dǎn, qīng rè lì shī*].

Points for Damp-Heat in the Spleen Channel [脾经湿热 *pí jīng shī rè*]

SP-9 Yin Mound Spring [阴陵泉 *yīn líng quán*]

LR-5 Woodworm Canal [蠡沟 *lǐ gōu*]

These two points disinhibit dampness and resolve toxins [利湿解毒 *lì shī jiě dú*].

Points for Qi Stagnation and Blood Stasis [气滞血瘀 *qì zhì xuè yū*]

LR-3 Supreme Surge [太冲 *tài chōng*]

PC-6 Inner Pass [内关 *nèi guān*]

BL-40 Bend Center [委中 *wěi zhōng*]

SP-10 Sea of Blood [血海 *xuè hǎi*]

LR-3 and PC-6 are used to course the liver and resolve depression [疏肝解郁 *shū gān jiě yù*] and to regulate qì dynamic [调畅气机 *tiáo chàng qì jī*].

BL-40 and SP-10 quicken blood and transform stasis [活血化瘀 *huó xuè huà yū*]. SP-10 is indicated for all skin diseases related to the blood aspect [血分 *xuè fēn*] or damp qì [湿气 *shī qì*].

Points for Yīn Depletion Blood Stagnation [阴亏血滞 *yīn kuī xuè zhì*]

LR-2 Moving Between [行间 *xíng jiān*]

KI-7 Recover Flow [复溜 *fù liū*]

KI-6 Shining Sea [照海 *zhào hǎi*]

LR-2 is the spring point [荣穴 *yíng xué*] of the liver channel and has a heat-clearing function. When heat is gone, yīn can be preserved. KI-7 and KI-6 increase yīn humor [阴液 *yīn yè*]. When yīn is supplemented, blood stagnation can be freed.

