

WEIGHT LOSS

Three Formulas, Many Possibilities

By Kirsti Reed, DOM

While presenting a weight loss seminar around the country I had many requests from clinicians for an herbal formula with a stronger action on dampness. Practitioners were also concerned that many patients with a weight problem have chronic loose stools and cannot tolerate rhubarb root (*da huang*). In my clinic, I often use a modification of *Ping Wei San* with weight loss patients in order to strongly treat the dampness and stagnation that occurs with some overweight or obese patients. *Ping Wei San* is the inspiration for **Resolve the Middle Formula**, a new formula designed to address the damp stagnation issue safely, without *da huang*. *Ping Wei San* is generally only used for a short duration, but this version has been modified to allow a patient to remain on the formula for many months, provided there are breaks between courses of treatment, or that the formula is supplemented with at least small amounts of protective tonics—those that generate fluids as well as supplement qi. The following is a discussion of three effective weight loss formulas and their applications.

HAWTHORN & FENNEL FORMULA

This formula has a broad application when it comes to weight loss. In most cases, **Hawthorn & Fennel Formula** (*Shan Zha Xiao Hui Xiang Fang*) can be used as the herbal foundation for a general weight loss program. I have personal experience using this formula for my own 65 lb weight loss. Using this formula helped me to have consistent weight loss without ever hitting a plateau. I took the formula for many months without any issue or side effect. Another benefit of this formula is its ability to lower cholesterol. Cassia seed (*jue ming zi*), hawthorn (*shan zha*), rhubarb root and rhizome (*da huang*), alisma (*ze xie*), and green tea leaf (*lu cha*) all have been shown to have an action to reduce blood lipids. **Hawthorn & Fennel Formula** also relieves food stagnation that can cause bloating and discomfort. Additionally, it gently reduces generalized edema.

In terms of Chinese medical actions, **Hawthorn & Fennel Formula**: drains dampness, moves qi and blood, disperses food stagnation, moves stool, supplements the spleen, clears liver heat, regulates the appetite, and adjusts metabolism. When deciding on the right formula for weight loss patients, **Hawthorn & Fennel Formula** is best administered to those who have a more robust constitution. Though the formula does contain the qi supplementing herbs astragalus (*huang qi*) and atractylodes (*bai zhu*), these herbs are included to balance the effect of the strong draining, descending, and heat clearing herbs: alisma (*ze xie*), raphani (*lai fu zi*), nelumbinis (*he ye*), rhubarb (*da huang*) and cassia (*jue ming zi*). Furthermore, the formula contains *da huang*, so it is contraindicated for those with marked spleen qi deficiency symptoms such as loose stool or diarrhea. In such cases, the practitioner first should supplement the spleen qi and firm up the stool with formulas like **Six Gentlemen** (*Liu Jun Zi Tang*) or **Ginseng and Atractylodes** (*Shen Ling Bai Zhu San*) for a month or two, depending on the severity of the symptoms. That should prepare the patient to begin a full on weight loss program. However, if it seems that dampness is causing the diarrhea or loose stool rather than spleen qi deficiency, then the appropriate formula to transition the patient into a more aggressive program is **Resolve the Middle Formula** (see below).

PORIA 15 FORMULA

This formula is similar to **Hawthorn & Fennel Formula** in its broad application for general weight loss. The Chinese medical actions of **Poria 15 Formula** (*Shi Wu Wei Fu Ling Pian*) are: drains damp, moves qi and blood, relieves food stagnation, moves the bowels, benefits the spleen and kidneys, and clears the liver. Like the above formula, **Poria 15 Formula** also can help to reduce cholesterol, relieve food stagnation and edema. In contrast, **Poria 15 Formula** can be given to those with mild underlying yang deficiency. But like **Hawthorn &**

Fennel Formula, if loose stool or diarrhea is part of the pattern, the formula is contra-indicated. I frequently use this formula in cases where stagnation of qi and damp has led to severe constipation. **Poria 15 Formula** is a great remedy for damp stagnation in the bowels. Please be aware that there are cold herbs in this formula. It is not appropriate if the patient has severe yang deficiency with obvious cold signs. The spleen qi tonics in the formula are generally sufficient when mild yang deficiency is present.

Both **Poria 15** and **Hawthorn & Fennel** formulas are useful in assisting the weight loss process for those with normal to strong constitutions. Those patients with marked digestive weakness or cold signs should have these issues addressed before committing to a weight loss program. Without a properly functioning digestive system our patients are not going to be able to lose weight in a healthy and sustainable way.

RESOLVE THE MIDDLE FORMULA

As mentioned above, this formula was inspired by *Ping Wei San*, which is comprised of atractylodes (*cang zhu*), magnolia (*hou po*), fresh ginger (*sheng jiang*), citrus peel (*chen pi*), toasted licorice root (*zhi gan cao*), and jujube (*da zao*). **Resolve the Middle Formula** (*Jia Wei Ping Wei Fang*) has been modified with additional damp draining herbs as well as qi moving herbs.

Resolve the Middle Formula treats stagnation in the middle warmer caused by damp turbidity. Unlike the two formulas above, **Resolve the Middle Formula** can be used even when the patient has loose stool. Frequent over-indulgence of food or alcohol, and poor diet can wrap the spleen in dampness. This does not always result in deficiency. The encumbrance of damp compromises the spleen's transportation and transformation functions. When the patient presents with damp encumbrance in the middle warmer, use **Resolve the Middle Formula** before addressing the root conditions. Signs and

symptoms may include frequent abdominal distention, diarrhea/loose stools, heavy limbs, dull taste buds, no desire for fluids, a thick, slimy tongue coat, and a rolling, moderate, or confined pulse.

Since all disease eventually affects the kidneys, one of the ways that long-standing dampness affects the kidneys is by hindering the will. This hindrance

of will can sometimes keep people from initiating or sticking to a weight loss plan. Thus, the purpose of the formula and the name of the formula is twofold. **Resolve the Middle Formula** not only resolves the dampness in the middle warmer but also strengthens the resolve in those embarking on a weight loss plan.

Assisting patients in the weight loss process is one of the most difficult tasks for any healthcare provider, but with these three formulas the process

can be much easier. Patient compliance is generally what hinders success more than anything else. So it is crucial to educate patients about diet and exercise. It sometimes seems that we are able to perform magic on the sick. However, when it comes to weight loss, the patient is truly the magician and we are just a coach or a facilitator for change.

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RESOLVE THE MIDDLE FORMULA

Atractylodes <i>Cang Zhu</i>	14%
Coix <i>Yi Yi Ren</i>	12%
Hawthorn <i>Shan Zha</i>	11%
Magnolia <i>Hou Po</i>	9%
Citrus Peel <i>Chen Pi</i>	8%
Aurantii <i>Zhi Shi</i>	8%
Vladimiria <i>Chuan Mu Xiang</i>	7%
Amomi <i>Sha Ren</i>	7%
Codonopsis <i>Dang Shen</i>	6%
Poria <i>Fu Ling</i>	6%
Zingiberis <i>Recens Sheng Jiang</i>	4%
Toasted Licorice Root <i>Zhi Gan Cao</i>	4%
Jujube <i>Da Zao</i>	4%