

**Title:** Chinese Herbal Medicine in the Treatment of Dry Blood type Tinea Pedis

**Author:** Marc Daniel Salmon

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Tinea pedis is thought to be the world's most common fungal infection with about 70% of the population considered to be infected at any one time (Robbins & Wade Foster, 2005). Dry Blood type Tinea pedis is the most difficult type to treat as agreed by both Western and Traditional Chinese medical theory and practice (Fitzpatrick, Johnson, Wolff & Summond, 2001; Yihou, 2004). Western medicine applications have shown strong efficacy during treatment, but are plagued by severe adverse side effects. Furthermore, western medicines perform poorly post-treatment due to frequent rebound effect. Chinese herbal medicine provides an alternative to western medical applications, one of them being a herbal vinegar soak. Chinese herbal vinegar soak has been successfully used to treat the condition for centuries (Yihou, 2004); however, there have been no clinical trials to evaluate its efficacy empirically.

**Aim:** To test the efficacy and a long-term effect of a specific formula of Chinese herbal medicine soaked in ordinary brown malt vinegar in the treatment of Dry Blood type Tinea pedis.

**Method:** A quantitatively, longitudinal, open label, within-subject design was used to test the experimental hypothesis that the Chinese herbal vinegar soak will significantly improve the severity of Dry Blood type Tinea Pedis with no rebound of the condition within 4-weeks after treatment. Twenty participants were recruited for this study (female to male ration was 2:3). The treatment comprised of participants applying the Chinese herbal vinegar soak to their feet for 15 minutes once per day for the period of 6 weeks. Participants were examined at three time points: baseline, 6 weeks and 10 weeks. The severity of the condition was scored on a 6-point rating scale at each time point. Digital photographs were taken at each assessment and were used to rate the severity of the condition for each participant. The rating was conducted by pre-trained independent raters in order to objectify the rating procedure. A self-administered questionnaire was used to record the compliance with the treatment.

**Results:** The results demonstrated that the Chinese herbal medicine significantly improved the severity of the Dry Blood type Tinea pedis with no rebound effect over 4-week post-treatment follow-up period. Compliance did not significantly affect the efficacy of the treatment and did not correlate significantly with the rate of the improvement. Neither age nor gender had significant effect on the effect of the treatment. Only minor adverse side effects were reported.

**Conclusion:** The Chinese herbal vinegar soak is an effective treatment for the Dry Blood type Tinea pedis with minimal adverse side effects, with sustainable results over 4 weeks upon cessation of the treatment. Whilst these findings are encouraging, they are preliminary and should be treated with caution due to the limitations of the methodology used for the present investigation.