



Kung Fu
MEDICINE

A Warriors Guide for Treating Martial Arts Injuries
with Chinese Herbs

By
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Note to reader: This book is intended as an information guide. The remedies, approaches, and techniques described herein are meant to supplement, and not to be a substitute for professional medical care or treatment. They should not be used to treat a serious ailment without prior consultation with a qualified health care professional.

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Acknowledgements

Since I began practicing martial arts more than a quarter century ago, like most practitioners who reach advanced levels of training I have had my share of injuries. Fortunately all except two have been minor. The more serious injuries not necessarily in the order of severity were a fractured carpal bone that was a result of an over-zealous attempt at hand conditioning, and a second more serious hip injury that required hip replacement surgery. Fortunately, I am happy to report that I do not suffer from any negative side-effects from either injury.

And while there is no question that credit for my successful recovery is owed to the surgeon and most of all God almighty who guided his hand, I am equally as indebted to the Chinese herbal formulas that were taken throughout my successful yearlong recovery (from hip-replacement surgery).

As an expression of gratitude for my minimal pain and suffering, which I attribute to a large measure to their generosity of spirit in teaching me the Chinese Healing Arts, I am dedicating this book to the following people. Urayoanna Trinidad and the faculty at The Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine New York City, of which I am an alumnus, and Dr. Lai Fu Cai, Director of the Department of Herbology at the Academy of Chinese Culture and Health Sciences, Oakland California, to whom I will always be a devoted student.

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Introduction

Since their creation thousands of years ago a common practice shared by most traditional styles of Asian martial arts has been the practice of using herbs for treating injuries. Detailed instructions in the use of herbs for treating internal and external trauma was an integral part of advanced karate and kung fu training that was handed down from master to student one generation to the next.

Until recently this empirical medical skill that was developed over the course of many centuries through the agonizing often painful process of trial and error, was the primary method of treatment for treating serious life threatening injuries, as well as the minor bumps and bruises that were considered an unavoidable consequence of the strenuous daily training required to perfect their art.

An outgrowth of ancient Taoist herbal practices and the branch of traditional Chinese trauma medicine known as *dit da yao*, *the injury management protocol* often referred to as *hit medicine*, has been practiced by warriors as diverse as Shaolin Monks, Okinawa Te Masters and Samurai Warriors.

The long standing relationship between Herbology and the fighting arts has been the subject of medical books and Buddhist and Taoist treatises. The ancient alliance is also mentioned in *Bubishi*, which is often referred to as the bible of karate as well as some of China's literary treasures commonly referred to as *Chinese classics*. A notable example is the centuries old *Shaolin Bronze Man Book*. In the ancient text the author emphatically states that in order to avoid imprudence those who study fighting arts should also understand the basic principles of medicine. More recently in his publication *Okinawa Kempo Karate-jutsu Kumite* written in 1926, Motobu Choki (1871-1944) described resuscitation techniques, treatments for broken bones, dislocated joints, and vomiting blood caused by internal injury for which he offered herbal remedies. Like the author of *Shaolin Bronze Man Book* Master Choki also emphasized the importance of martial artists possessing basic injury management skills.

The importance of possessing skills such as having the ability to identify medicinal plants growing wild in fields and forests that could be used for treating potentially mortal wounds is accentuated by the fact that in some cases it was literally a matter of life or death!

Even though there is extensive documentation describing the relationship between healing and martial practices, in recent years the use of *hit medicine* has steadily declined. As a consequence the long standing tradition that was considered standard practice by our martial fore bearers is in danger of becoming a lost art.

If I would venture to guess I would say that the primary reasons for the time honored practice's waning popularity are the preoccupation of most modernists with developing self-defense capability, and their reliance on Western sports medicine for treating sports related injuries. If I had to narrow it down to a single cause I believe that it's the current obsession with perfecting fighting skills and a lack of interest in anything that does not promote greater combat proficiency that bears the brunt of the blame.

Unlike previous generations who believed that providing instruction in the use of herbs was an inseparable part of training, most contemporary martial arts instructors either marginalize or totally dismiss the importance of teaching the traditional art and consequently through no fault of their own, most contemporary martial artists lack dit da skills.

This total disregard for the importance of continuing the time honored practice is in stark contrast to generations past when not possessing basic herbal skills undermined the credibility of anyone claiming to have mastered the martial arts.

Along with receiving instructions in how to use herbs to manage injuries and enhance their training, high level martial artists were also taught how to use poisons such as Chan Su (toad venom) and Ma Qian Zi (strychnine) for both healing and killing. Having the ability to re-connect broken bones and re-set dislocations, a practice known as "bone setting," was also not uncommon.

Typically, different martial arts styles had their own unique set of herbal prescriptions which were modified versions of classical formulas used in Chinese trauma medicine. These powerful recipes underwent certain modifications that were primarily dictated by the training demands of

a particular style. Critical information about ingredients and the exact amounts needed to prepare these elixirs was a jealously guarded secret that was only divulged to fellow clan members who had proven their loyalty.

Even though in recent years there has been a change of attitude as far as with-holding information about the ancient formulas, an air of secrecy continues to surround some of the legendary prescriptions. As a consequence, information about some highly valued recipes created by some of martial art's most renowned grandmasters much to the detriment of the martial arts, were taken to the grave!

Concern over the threatened disappearance of this long standing tradition has prompted some martial artists trained in dit da yao to question whether it is more important to work toward re-instating this valuable adjunctive skill as part of traditional martial arts training, or maintain the air of secrecy surrounding the practice which many are convinced is a major contributing factor to the art's demise. It's the emerging school of thought that encourages the open exchange of information about the ancient prescriptions that inspired me to write this book.

Whether you're a beginning student or an advanced practitioner it is well known that injuries can occur at any stage of training. With that in mind, this book was written for students of the martial arts on all levels from white to advanced black belt levels. However, based on my belief that teaching injury management skills is a valuable adjunct to instruction in combat technique, I believe the book's study has particular value for those on the teaching levels of Sensei and Sifu.

Furthermore, I'm convinced that by familiarizing yourself with the information provided within these pages you can potentially influence the outcome in a serious medical emergency, as well as acquire the ability to treat martial arts injuries and avoid their reoccurrence in future years.

Traditional Chinese medicine supports the latter conclusions with its recommendation that all martial arts injuries even seemingly minor ones should be treated with dit da techniques in order to avoid long-range harm. TCM's recommendation is underscored by their warning ... *that all too often long-range complications such as arthritis and a host of other physical maladies that occur years later as the body ages, are a result of*

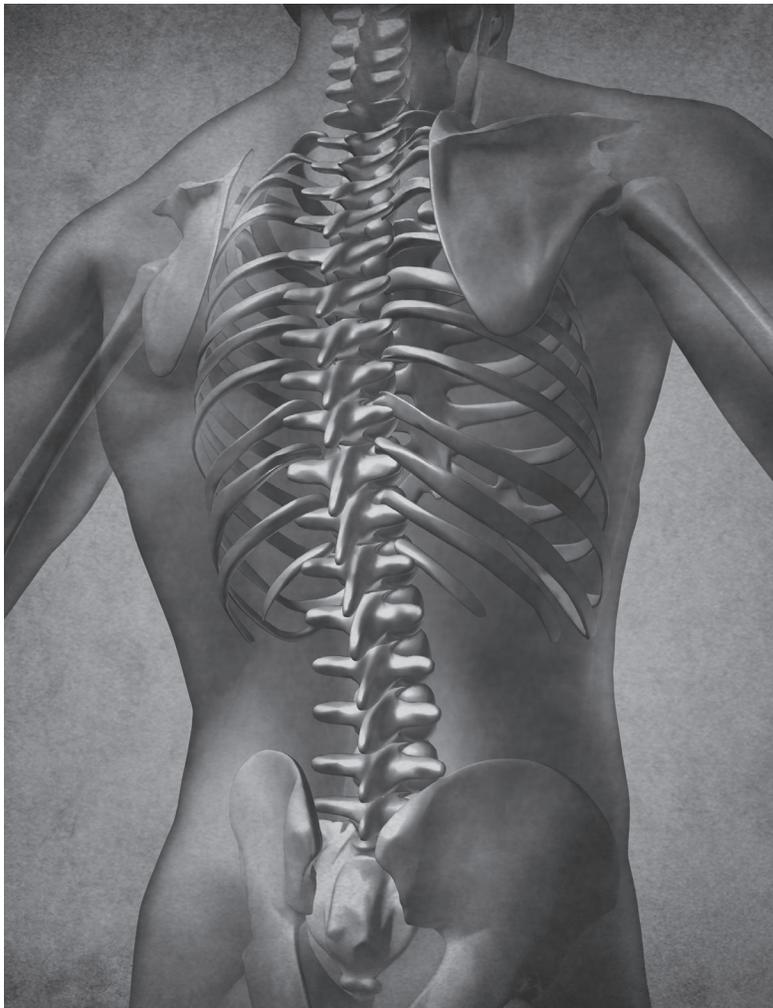
improper healing caused by faulty injury management. Dit da yao's ability to heal on the deepest levels compared to Western sports medicine's more superficial cures make its use worthy of consideration as an adjunct or a viable alternative to most conventional Western treatment.

Hopefully, *Kung Fu Medicine ~ A Warrior's Guide to Treating Injuries with Chinese Herbs* will first and foremost help minimize pain and suffering, reduce the training time that's lost due to injuries as well as inspire contemporary martial artists to consider reinstating the ancient practice as part of their training. Perhaps the greatest reward that is gained when the centuries-old practice is incorporated into one's training is that it allows martial artists to experience first-hand the immeasurable sense of balance and the profound effect that it has on their art when the cosmological forces (*yin and yang*) are harmonized by devoting equal amounts of time and effort into becoming both warrior (*yang*) and healer (*yin*).

Seven chapters in length, *Kung Fu Medicine* covers a variety of topics including: the basic principles of Chinese herbal medicine with an emphasis on Dit Da Yao (Hit Medicine), information on some of the most powerful herbs in Chinese Herbology to stop bleeding, along with examples of their use in some well-known classical formulas. I have also provided information on herbs and methods for treating injuries to ligaments and tendons, broken bones and dislocations. The book also offers an analysis of some of the standard ingredients used in legendary hand conditioning/iron palm formulas, along with the most powerful prescription known for treating injuries that are a result of ill-fated hand conditioning and or iron palm practice. In addition, I have also included formulas that resuscitate and restore consciousness, by "arousing the spirit, and restoring the pulse," as well as providing detailed instructions in the preparation of Chinese herbal liniments, medicinal wines, pills, and decoctions used for treating a wide range of injuries.

Chapter One

An Ounce of Prevention
is worth a Pound of Cure



An Ounce of Prevention is worth a Pound of Cure

STRETCHING

Although I wasn't entirely convinced that the precautionary warnings about the perils of martial arts training were not overexaggerated when I first began training, it only took a few injuries to convince me that due to the physical demands required to practice on advanced levels, predictions about the likelihood that pain and injuries would be part of my future were not entirely without merit.

The good news is that over the years I've learned that although an occasional injury is inevitable a large percentage of the injuries suffered by martial artists, especially injuries involving the sinews (ligaments and tendons) are often preventable. Like the other so-called "blood sports," the inherent risk of injuries from sparring and the physical demands of daily training make an occasional injury an unavoidable consequence that is more or less considered an acceptable part of the journey in an effort to master our art.

Be that as it may, the number of injuries and the training time that's lost during recovery can be dramatically reduced by doing three things:

1. adequately warming up before stretching
2. devoting a proportionate amount of time to stretching compared to the amount of time spent performing kata, practicing combat techniques, and sparring
3. making regular massage a part of your training regimen

Stretching, which stimulates the production of synovial fluid and lubricate the joints, increases the body's flexibility which is a major factor in the successful performance of a wide range of disciplines from archery, to ballet, to martial arts. Unlike students of the other disciplines, far too few martial arts practitioners truly recognize the benefits of stretching. Most marginalize its importance and pay a disproportionate amount of attention to strength training, cardio-vascular fitness, and perfecting combat skills.

In both classical dance as well as the martial arts our bodies are our instruments and a common goal of both disciplines should be the development of optimal flexibility. In the art of dance and likewise in the art of war the practitioner is encouraged to become as limber as he/she

is capable of in order to improve the performance of their art, and reduce the risk of injury.

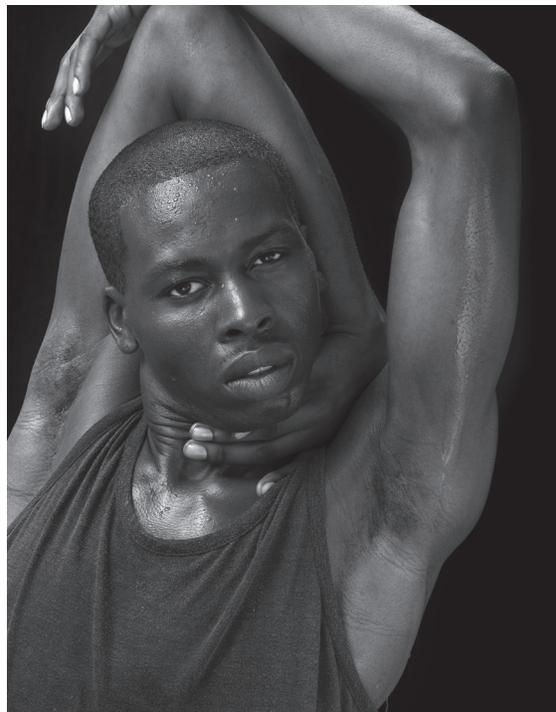
Practitioners of Chinese martial arts have always recognized the importance of making their bodies subtle and flexible in order to become proficient in kung fu and minimize the strains, sprains, and contusions that are an inherent part of training. A key component of their injury avoidance strategy is the attention that is given to attaining maximum flexibility by following a well-designed systematic stretching regimen.

According to traditional guidelines beginners and mid-level martial artists are advised to stretch a minimum once a day, three to five days per week to maintain flexibility. Higher level dedicated practitioners have been known to stretch as much as two to three times per day six or seven days a week.

Prescriptions like the legendary Taoist formula Jin Gu Jia Wan can be used to provide herbal support that enhances the effectiveness of the stretching regimen and further improves flexibility by increasing synovial fluid, improving circulation, and strengthening the joints. The recipe for Jin Gu Jia Wan can be found in Chapter 5.

To insure that optimal results are obtained there is one important point that needs to be emphasized. According to some of the most highly respected athletic trainers and martial arts instructors the idea that stretching is part of the warm-up is patently incorrect. According to these experts the warm up and stretching are two entirely separate events!

If the experts are to be believed two common errors in the training



regimen of many martial artists is the minimal amount of time that is devoted to stretching, and an unwillingness to postpone stretching until the body is sufficiently warm. There is unanimous agreement among these fitness gurus that stretching should always be preceded by a warm up in order to elevate the body temperature and improve connective tissue and muscle extension by increasing the circulation of blood and chi. When proper attention is given to this seemingly minor detail not only will it decrease the severity of an injury if one occurs, more significantly it can reduce injuries by as much as 60-70%.

HOW TO WARM UP THE BODY AND PREPARE FOR STRETCHING

The Warm-Up

A typical warm-up will usually begin with:

- » Joint rotation (ankles, knees, hips, elbows, shoulders, wrists)
- » Gentle twisting and bending movements (such as side twists/bending forward, touching ones toes)

Followed by:

- » Light calisthenics (such as push-ups, jumping jacks, sit-ups, etc.)
- » Brisk walking
- » Light jogging or rope jumping

The intensity and duration of the warm-up will vary from one individual to another depending on their physical capabilities. Generally speaking, the warm-up should be intense enough to increase body temperature and cause some sweating, but not so intense as to cause fatigue.

Once the warm-up is completed and stretching begins, a rule of thumb for determining the intensity of your stretch is that you should stretch to the point of tension, but not pain. Pay attention to warning signs of overstretching such as: quivering muscles, spasms or pain, and a decrease of range of motion.

When martial artists pay strict attention to the so-called finer points of stretching, there will be an increase in flexibility that will cause a noticeable improvement in the overall performance of their art as well as a dramatic reduction in the number of injuries.

While I am convinced that there are measurable benefits to be gained, it is a good idea to seek professional medical advice before starting a stretching regimen if you

- » recently fractured a bone
- » have an inflammation or infection in or around a joint
- » suffer from severe osteoporosis
- » lack joint stability or suffer from vascular diseases like thrombosis, varicose veins, phlebitis, etc.

MASSAGE

The other component of the injury prevention strategy that enhances stretching and is equally as important, is massage therapy. Although I prefer massage that combines Tui Na (Chinese massage) with Swedish techniques, some of the other popular types of massage such as Thai or Japanese massage can also be effective. In addition to making the body feel good it has been proven that frequent massage significantly reduces injuries by improving circulation in addition to increasing lymphatic flow. Massage is also known for its ability to promote flexibility and optimal functioning of the internal systems, muscles, and connective tissue.

Unlike stretching which is performed at the beginning of the training session, typically massage is administered at the end of the session. An exception is when it's used before an athletic event to relax the athlete and calm pre-event "jitters."

Regular massage improves the condition of the muscles and their functioning so they can work to maximum potential without malfunction or injury. Massage effectively rejuvenates exercise-damaged muscles and removes lactic acid the chemical that causes muscle fatigue and soreness. A residual benefit of removing this harmful chemical by-product of exertion from the body is a dramatic reduction in the number of injuries.

Until modern times the practice of exchanging massage between training partners (Dui Diào), (where one training partner massages the other) was a fairly common part of training. This well established protocol is an example of the important role that the ancient therapy has played in martial arts throughout its history. To further underscore my point I should mention that in years past, one of the ways that martial arts students would show their appreciation to the instructor for sharing their knowledge was by massaging the master at the end of the training session.

Some of the benefits of regular massage are:

- » prevents muscle and tendon injuries
- » reduces the strain and discomfort of training
- » restores lost mobility and flexibility

- » prevents spasms and promotes normal muscle functioning
- » reduces scar tissue
- » increases relaxation and reduces over-all body tension
- » improves over-all performance

Combining the two therapeutic protocols is one of the most effective safeguards against injuries and personifies the adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."



An Ounce of Prevention is worth a Pound of Cure

