

# Ba Wei Di Huang Wan (Rehmannia Eight)

## Alternate Names

- ❑ Shen Qi Wan
- ❑ Jin Gui Shen Qi Wan (Precious Golden Tonify the Qi Combination)

## History

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This formula is a lasting contribution of the master herbalist Zhang Zhong-Jing of the Han dynasty, and was first published in about 500 A.D. in Essentials of the Golden Cabinet.

Rehmannia Eight is one of the first formulas used by the budding veterinary herbalist, since it handily defies conventional medical expectations by being able to halt or even partially reverse renal failure, a very common condition in many geriatric dogs and cats.

In Chinese medicine, Qi is life force, and is generated through the mingling of Yin and Yang; Rehmannia Eight contains herbs that strengthen both. Its Yang tonics add warmth to the lower burner (abdomen) where the Kidneys and Bladder reside. This boost of power is believed to help concentrate urine while removing edema. Its other constituents help drive body water to the Kidneys, while other ingredients support the Kidney Yin (or the renal blood supply).

Success with Rehmannia Eight in renal failure helps us understand there are not just two populations of nephrons – fully functional or dead – in renal disease. Instead, there is a third contingent who is hypo-functioning, presumably due to hypoxia. When renal blood flow is boosted with Rehmannia Eight, these nephrons seem to be restored to full functional ability, resulting in increased urine concentrating ability and a seeming partial reversal of renal disease.

## Chief Indications

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Shen Qi Wan shares similar, though not identical, indications with Rehmannia Six and its derivatives. These include:

**Chronic renal failure** – Rehmannia promotes increased renal perfusion (GFR) yet reduces renal hypertension. It can be safely used with hypotensive drugs routinely used in the management of renal failure but will likely lower the required dose to achieve optimal effect. By preventing renal hypertension and promoting normal clearance, use of Rehmannia Eight allows simultaneous use of higher protein diets in renal failure patients, which in turn helps prevent anemia, renal hypoxia, and continued disease progression.

Rehmannia also benefits anemia directly, by stimulating bone marrow production of erythrocytes from two different stem cell lines. It also hinders progression of disease by its antioxidant effects and through inhibition of fibrosis within the kidney.

Many formulas contain *Rehmannia* and thus are of potential benefit to the kidneys. Use *Shen Qi Wan* when animals exhibit cold intolerance, polyuria, polydipsia, incontinence, inappetance and vomiting.

Avoid use of this formula in acute nephritis. Urine protein-creatinine ratios can provide a useful guide as to whether it is appropriate. Ratios of about 3.5 or lower in azotemic animals are assumed due to damage to the glomerulus from under-perfusion. Values over 4 are assumed due to ongoing acute or subacute glomerular inflammation. For these patients, use **Minor Bupleurum (Xiao Chai Hu Tang)** or its derivatives together with **San Ren Tang (Three Seeds Combination)**. Patients that benefit from *Rehmannia* are those that substantially improve from sustained aggressive fluid therapy. Patients for which it is contraindicated will often benefit only in the first few hours of fluid therapy.

It's worth noting that many canine renal failure patients will at first require the use of anti-inflammatory formulas like **Minor Bupleurum** and **Three Seeds Combination**, but will then go on to eventually benefit from **Rehmannia Eight**. The time frame over which this transition occurs can be as little as a few days and as long as a few years, and must therefore be determined through regular monitoring of renal parameters including UPC ratios. As a reward, the practitioner can expect to routinely move patients backwards through the IRIS staging sequence, in some cases reversing the renal failure altogether.

**Feline Hyperthyroidism** – While not sufficiently strong to reverse clinical hyperthyroidism, *Shen Qi Wan* is of tremendous benefit to patients post-operatively, or following radio-iodide therapy of the disease. Renal failure is common in these animals due to sudden declines in renal filtration pressure, and appears virtually entirely prevented by the GFR promoting and antihypertensive effects of *Shen Qi Wan*.

**Constipation** – Constipation is a common complaint in elderly animals, especially cats. *Rehmannia Eight* works well to normalize the frequency of bowel movements while reducing stool dryness, just as it does in humans. Like other nourishing roots used in Chinese herbal medicine, *Rehmannia* contains polysaccharides which can help to retain moisture in the stool.

**Asthma** – *Rehmannia* and Cinnamon both have a long history of use in the treatment of asthma, accounting for the efficacy of *Shen Qi Wan* in elderly asthmatic cats. Symptoms are routinely eliminated with its use. Some of the benefits of *Shen Qi Wan* in asthma may be due to *Rehmannia*'s demonstrated ability to inhibit type I hypersensitivity reactions.

**Diabetes mellitus** - *Shen Qi Wan* minimizes blood sugar swings and reduces hyperglycemia, potentially lowering the insulin requirement of diabetic patients.

The anti-diabetic effect comes from multiple constituents. *Rehmannia* promotes lower lipids and blood glucose in diabetics. *Cornus* has been shown to significantly lower blood glucose, and *Alisma* improved both blood glucose and lipid profiles. Cinnamon counters hyperglycemia by lowering fasting blood glucose levels.

Despite the benefits of the formula in diabetes, the product cannot by itself produce hypoglycemia. Any hypoglycemia noted in animals receiving the formula necessitates a reduction in insulin dosage.

In cats, insulin dosing should be reviewed weekly to no later than bi-weekly if the formula is used and a low carbohydrate (<15% on a dry matter basis) or unprocessed meat-based diet has also been instituted. Under the influence of the herbs and diet, most cats tend to return to a euglycemic state.

Other formulas are useful for diabetes mellitus as well. **Zhi Bai Di Huang Wan** counters diabetic neuropathy by controlling blood sugar in uncontrolled diabetics.

In young to middle-aged cats without degenerative myelopathy, **San Ren Tang** is often utilized to sensitize to insulin and help lower blood glucose. Both cats and dogs can stay on the formula long term, as long as signs and symptoms warrant its use, and appetite does not become depressed.

**Wei Ling Tang**, a derivative of **Ping Wei San**, can be considered for diabetes mellitus in chilly patients.

In type II diabetics, where animals remain overweight with a ravenous appetite and increased thirst, consider **Si Miao San (Four Marvels Combination)**.

**Cognitive dysfunction** – Rehmannia contains ample amounts of catalpol, an neuroprotective iridoid glucoside that promotes angiogenesis to relieve cognitive disorders ranging from depression to dementia.

**Fertility** – Variants of Shen Qi Wan boost estradiol levels, potentially allowing heats to become more apparent and regular.

## Formula Design

Sheng Di Huang	Rehmannia root
Shan Yao	Chinese Yam rhizome
Shan Zhu Yu	Cornus fruit
Fu Ling	Poria
Ze Xie	Alisma tuber
Mu Dan Pi	Moutan bark
Gui Zhi	Cinnamon twig
Fu Zi	Prepared Aconite root

Much of the reason for the longstanding use of Shen Qi Wan stems from its design, where three herbs that address deficiency are matched to three herbs addressing excess, in order to prevent side effects.

The three tonics herbs are Rehmannia, Cornus, and Chinese Yam. Fresh Rehmannia is utilized in this formula, and per the *Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing* (Shen Nong's Classic of the Materia Medica), not only generates the Yin complement of the body but drives circulation.

Cornus nourishes Liver Blood and Yin, helps astringe Kidney Essence leakage, and according to Shen Nong, drives out Damp Cold painful obstruction. Chinese Yam supports the Spleen in the manufacture of Yin. It helps astringe Essence and avoids dryness in the Kidneys and Lung as well.

Balancing these three tonics are three cooling and draining herbs. Alisma promotes fluid metabolism, thereby preventing Rehmannia from cloying the lower burner. It clears lower burner Damp Heat accumulation by guiding it out through the Bladder.

Poria supports the Spleen while preventing build up of Damp in Spleen following use of potentially cloying tonics like Rehmannia and Yam. Moutan Bark clears Heat and drains Fire from the Liver, moderating any Heat accumulating in the system from Stasis and Yin deficiency, as well as the warming and astringing effects of Cornus.

To this base formula of six herbs, Cinnamon twig and prepared Aconite are added. Aconite tonifies the Kidney Yang, while Cinnamon twig restores normal circulation both internally and externally. It also combines with Poria to accentuate the removal of Damp from the body. The combining of two Yang herbs with three Yin herbs

## Commercial Modifications

In its initial form, as published by Zhang Zhong Jing at the end of the Han dynasty, Shen Qi Wan is the perfect formula for the elderly human patient, even as they present in the modern day developed world. Aging in humans is invariably characterized by an increasing tendency toward:

- ❑ Damp accumulations and Blood stasis, producing osteoarthritis, painful osteoporosis, stroke, and atherosclerosis
- ❑ Empty Heat and Stasis Heat, characterized by difficulty sleeping and a tendency to wake up early
- ❑ Yin deficiency, producing cognitive difficulties, and a shrinking stature

Despite this, beginning in the Tang dynasty, Cinnamon twig was replaced in the formula by Cinnamon bark, which has more of Kidney Yang nurturing effect, in order to focus the formula more on generating Source Qi.

While the wisdom of this change is debatable as far as human medicine is concerned, it does produce a formula more suited to the aging animal. Elderly dogs and particularly cats do not suffer quite as much from systemic Blood stasis as they age as humans do. Aging dogs and cats manifest more the declines in Kidney Qi and Yin deficiency, with resultant Yang separation, leading to:

- ❑ **Polyuria and polydipsia**
- ❑ **Urinary incontinence**
- ❑ **Hind limb weakness and tremors**
- ❑ **Stiffness**
- ❑ **A tendency to sleep late**
- ❑ **Memory loss**
- ❑ **Deafness**
- ❑ **Fatigue**

Stroke, osteoporosis, and atherosclerosis are not generally seen, although in dogs with congestive heart failure and osteoarthritis, the original version of Shen Qi Wan is likely more appropriate.

For animals with minimal Blood stasis, but instead the separation of Yin and Yang that produces polydipsia and nocturnal agitation, the substitution of Cinnamon bark (Rou Gui) for Cinnamon twig (Gui Zhi) is appropriate. Cinnamon as a herb has a moving effect, which includes the restoration of normal descent of Qi in the interior. Cinnamon bark accentuates this internal descending effect, such that even Yang floating on the body surface is returned to its rightful place in the Kidneys, where it can interact with Yin to produce Source Qi.

A second worthwhile substitution in the purely Kidney deficient patient is the use of cooked versus uncooked Rehmannia. Cooked Rehmannia (Shu Di Huang) is less cooling, and nourishes the Blood as well as Yin. It is more digestible by the elderly animal with compromised digestion, and better addresses the common occurrence of anemia in elderly dogs and cats.

## Supporting Symptoms

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Shen Qi Wan treats the Chinese medical diagnosis of Kidney deficiency, which encompasses some of the typical signs of weak kidneys in conventional medicine, including:

- ❑ **Polyuria**
- ❑ **Urinary incontinence**
- ❑ **Nocturia**
- ❑ **Mild to moderate azotemia**

Many Rehmannia-based formulas strengthen renal function, but patients that benefit from Rehmannia Eight are almost invariably **chilly**.

Renal impairment is most often seen in the elderly animal. Accompanying signs believed due also to Kidney deficiency that Rehmannia Eight has the reputation of aiding include:

- ❑ **Low back weakness or stiffness**
- ❑ **Hind limb weakness**
- ❑ **Hind leg tremors**
- ❑ **Ataxia**

**You Gui Wan (Rehmannia and Eucommia)** may be even more effective in resolving these concerns where due to normal ageing.

The **pulse** of animals that benefit is usually deep, weak or feeble, but may be toned

The **tongue** of animals that benefit from Rehmannia Eight usually has a purplish hue.

## Cautions and Contraindications

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Rehmannia Eight is contraindicated in acute renal inflammation where renal blood flow is already increased. It is, however, safe for patients with renal hypertension secondary to reduced renal perfusion. The aconite used in the formula is specially treated and is non-toxic.

## Ages and Breeds

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Commonly used in geriatric patients, especially cats