

Minerals in Chinese Medicine

Great pharmacological works of the Qin, Han and Ming Dynasties of China contain records of 1892 Chinese herb drugs. Of these 1892 drugs, over 160 types are of mineral origins. Presently, 15 types of minerals are being used as drugs in Chinese medicine. They are listed as follows:

- (1) Talc (滑石): A hydrated form of magnesium silicate used to prevent heatstroke.
- (2) “Mengshi” (礞石): A type of mica, a hard and heavy non-metal mineral. Only the minerals with white starring points that turn yellow after burning can be used as drugs. Mengshi has two types — blue and white ones. The blue ones are more appropriate for drug use as it can remove phlegm and lower the Qi in the body.
- (3) Magnetite (磁石): A magnetic iron ore, granular or in a block, iron-black in color, opaque and dense in nature. It provides nourishment for the kidneys, treats fever and suppresses asthma.
- (4) “Haifushi” (海浮石): A kind of porous coral, gray-white in color and semi-transparent. It can be used to clear the routes of the lungs, reduce temperatures in fevers, diminish accumulated blocks and dissolve phlegm.



Mirabilite.

- (5) Smithsonite (爐甘石): A product of zinc sulfide or copper mines. It is a semi-transparent or opaque solid ore, known to suppress pain, stimulate the growth of muscles and improve visual clarity.
- (6) Alunite (明矾石): Chinese medicine names it “minfan” (明矾). It is a colorless, transparent and water-soluble mineral consisting of hydrated potassium aluminum sulfate. It aids in pest elimination, detoxification and phlegm exclusion.
- (7) “Pishi” (砒石): This arsenium ore is also known as “xionghuang” (雄黃) among the Chinese. It can be used to diminish phlegm and kill malaria parasites.
- (8) “Sal-ammoniac” (礞砂): A kind of hydrargyrum ore. The bright red types are called “dahongnaosha” (大紅礞砂). The solid ones are of good quality and are used for diminishing accumulated blocks, dissolving phlegm.
- (9) “Chitiekuan” (赤鐵礦): A brown iron ore. Chinese medicine calls it “daizheshi” (代赫石). The types that can be used to clear liver fever, stop hemorrhage, vomiting and asthma are in the form of brown blocks.
- (10) Borax: Chinese medicine calls it “pengsha” (硼砂), also known as “xiyueshi” (西月石). It is in the form of small, colorless, transparent or semi-transparent crystals, highly soluble in water. It can be used to remove chest and diaphragm phlegm fever and aids in detoxification.
- (11) “Hetiekuan” (黑鐵礦): Chinese medicine calls it “yuyuliang” (禹餘糧). It is a brown iron ore



Alunite.

- which contains black-brown thin powder. The best types are those that do not contain sand. It functions in astriction, curing fevers and stopping hemorrhage.
- (12) “Dansha” (丹砂): A kind of hydrargyrum sulfide ore. It is polymorphous, red, or black in color with metal brightness. It functions as a tranquilizer and a detoxicant.
 - (13) Halloysite: Chinese medicine calls it “chishizhi” (赤石脂). These silicate, red-brown fragile blocks help to stop diarrhea and hemorrhage.
 - (14) Gypsum (石膏): It is a kind of hydrated calcium sulfate. Of the two soft and hard forms, only the soft ones can be used in drug manufacturing. It cures fevers, quenches thirst and acts as a tranquilizer. It can also be used externally to astrict ulcer.
 - (15) Mirabilite (芒硝): Also called “puxiao” (樸硝) and “yuanmingfen” (元明粉) in Chinese medicine. It is a kind of natural sodium sulfate, contained in ores, seawater and salt mineral springs. It can be found as colorless, transparent, polygonal crystals which are easily dehydrated into white powder. It cures indigestion.