

# Chinese Pathology

04/09/05

## Damp Phlegm in Lungs

Phlegm is mucus from the respiratory system. (phlegm can cause lots of secondary problems in the body.) It's presence indicates that fluid metabolism isn't proper in the body. Either it's not being transformed or dispersed properly.

Phlegm is: "Boiling of fluids due to repressed fire."

The spleen is the basis for phlegm. The spleen qi is in charge of transforming and transporting fluids. But other organs are associated, kidneys and lungs (upper water way), for example. "The spleen produces the phlegm and the lungs store the phlegm."

With damp phlegm in the lungs, look to see if there are some digestive problems as well (spleen weakness).

General Symptoms of phlegm:

- x You want to cough when this is in the lungs. (It doesn't matter if there is heat or cold with the damp phlegm.)
- x "Bouts" of coughing or coughing fits.
- x Shortness of breath or dyspnea – you are having difficulty breathing

## ***Cold Damp Phlegm in the lungs***

A chronic bronchitis – this cold go on for months.

### **Symptoms of Cold Damp Phlegm in the lungs:**

- x Since we are talking cold, there is copious, clear or white sputum that is easy to cough up or expectorate.
- x You may be able to hear the rattling of the phlegm in the throat or chest.
- x Patient feels stuffy or clogged up. (Person may feel like they have to sit up in order to breath – pretty heavy chest congestion. They feel like they are drowning)
- x A feeling of thoracic glomus, a feeling like something is stuck in the throat – peach pit glomus.
- x Complexion will look cold, pale and pasty.
- x Tongue will be slimy and sticky with a white coat.
- x Person feels cold in their arms and legs. They want a blanket and want to bundle up.
- x You'll see signs that it is in the lungs, you'll see the clear white phlegm and coughing. The phlegm obstructs the downbearing of the lungs. It will be copious and cold. Too much phlegm shows there's too much phlegm in the lungs.
- x Pulse:

There is a phlegm pulse. It's a slippery or wiry slippery pulse. It doesn't have sharp edges to it. But if it's cooked down, it can have a bit of an edge to it.

This can be associated with a weakness of the spleen, so the pulse may be weak (middle pulse on the left side.) Deficient pulses with the phlegm would point toward a spleen problem, excess pulses with phlegm might not be associated with the spleen.

### **Causes:**

- x Poor diet – too many cold foods
- x Weak digestion or injured digestion
- x Too many mucus forming foods (Cheese and ice cream in excess of example or greasy foods)
- x People who get colds a lot - having a cold hurts the lungs, it makes them more vulnerable.

### **Treatment principle:**

- x Resolve phlegm and restore the lung function
  - x You want the lungs to descend or disperse.
  - x You might want to help the spleen if you are seeing spleen involvement.

### **Cold-rheum**

**chronic** phlegm in the lungs (It's a long time problem – it doesn't just happen – middle-age or elderly people mostly)

Rheum is also called tan. It's somewhere on the continuum from watery to thicker: damp → rheum → phlegm

### **Symptoms**

This can be specifically a spleen-yang deficiency problem because of the cold. It is often associated with cold symptoms as well.

- x foamy glossy tongue coat (pale body) crisco covered.
- x Pulse can be almost wiry – pulse can be tight or tense. It may show weakness as well because of the yang deficiency.
- x People may vomit up this watery foamy phlegm
- x frog rattle or kitten purr in the chest
- x somber white (not bright white)

### **Treatment:**

Resolve phlegm and tonify the lung, perhaps build up the spleen.  
You can use moxa because this is a cold problem.

### **Heat Damp Phlegm in the lungs**

This is a chronic type of problem. It's similar to damp phlegm, but add the heat instead of the cold. You see signs and symptoms of heat.

## **Symptoms:**

- x Concentrated fluids
- x Fever
- x Dry mouth
- x red body with a yellow fur
- x still going to see signs of the lung obstruction, coughing (a harsh barking type of cough)
- x Shortness of breathing
- x stuffy chest
- x the real key, is that the phlegm is yellow or even green or blood tinged. (It could be a foul smelling sputum as well.
- x Perhaps a bitter taste in the mouth because of the heat (usually more of a liver problem)
- x Pulse is rapid, slippery (or even wiry slipper)

## **Causes:**

- x Weak spleen qi (stagnant phlegm can turn into heat)
- x Eating too many greasy foods with a hot property to it.
  - x (fried meats)
  - x tobacco (chewing or smoking tobacco)
  - x alcohol
- x invasion of wind heat (or wind cold turning into phlegm heat) (A cold that turns into bronchitis or pneumonia)

## **Treatment Principle:**

- x resolve phlegm (ST40)
- x clear the heat
- x stimulate the lungs to descend and disperse

## ***Brewing Phlegm damp***

This again is a chronic problem. It is common in chronic bronchitis. It involves heat the damp condition in the lungs.

## **Symptoms:**

- x cough,
- x thick and sticky phlegm (like emphysema)
- x feel oppression /stuffy in the chest
- x tongue fur is slimy (a dirty tongue) (take flour and dissolve it on the tongue – clumpy/lumpy and add the yellow/brown color)

This can eventually injure the lungs. (Like emphysema. This can cause a deficiency of lung qi.)

When a person catches everything going around, and it always turns into bronchitis. They

have damaged lung qi.

## ***Foods and Phlegm***

### **Phlegm producing foods:**

- x Animal meats
- x Dairy products
- x Peanuts
- x sobean products
- x orange juice (lemon juice cuts phlegm as does grapefruit)
- x Sweets
- x Chocolate

### **Foods to resolve phlegm or expel phlegm**

#### ***cold phlegm – warming herbs or neutral ones***

- x fresh ginger
- x fennel (good for weight loss)
- x candied pepper
- x garlic & onions
- x horseradish
- x inula (inula tea) helps to cough up the phlegm

#### ***Neutral***

- x flax seed
- x turnips
- x mushrooms (for damp or phlegm)
- x coltsfoot tea

#### ***Warm phlegm – cooling and resolve phlegm***

- x watercress
- x radish
- x daikon (food stagnation as well)
- x barley grasses
- x nettles
- x mullein (tea from the leaves)

#### ***Foods that digest and don't make mucus***

- x vegetables
- x fruits
- x sprouts
- x small amounts of legumes
- x small amounts of grains
- x small amounts of almonds
- x simple foods (no rich sauces and dessert)

- x foods that don't compete for digestion, and smaller meals.

## **Lung Qi Deficiency**

This is a chronic problem. It takes a while to develop. It's fairly serious.

### **Causes:**

- ✓ Hereditary weakness
- ✓ Develop lung qi deficiency after wind/head or wind/cold that isn't properly treated
- ✓ lung diseases repeatedly (especially wind-heat colds. Heat is more damaging than cold colds.)
- ✓ Because of general body qi deficiency.
  - ✓ Poor diet (not putting good food into the engine)
- ✓ Sitting for long periods of time.
- ✓ Emotions affecting the lungs –
  - ✓ long time sadness (sadness dissolves qi)
  - ✓ Worry – knots qi. (Spleen is damaged, sheng cycle next is the lungs)

### **Symptoms**

#### **General qi deficiency**

- x Face is pale (bright white)
- x weak spirit
- x general physical weakness

Lung governs qi

#### **Symptoms**

- x shortness of breath (you can't take a deep breath)
- x weak cough
- x quite/soft/ "low" – timorous voice - "they do not want to speak"
- x 5 phase association with skin/and defense qi and pores (if lung qi is weak, wei qi is weak too, the pores don't open and close properly) Daytime abnormal sweating. Called spontaneous sweat.
- x As above, the defensive qi can't protect the body, so they catch everything. (good interview question)
- x as above, since wei qi helps to keep you warm, your ability to stay warm may be compromised.
- x Tongue has a pale body (not hot or cold), thin white coat.
- x Deficient pulse (weak pulse, empty pulse, big at first – but then disappears – it is easy to occlude – like a scallion stalk) Especially on the lung pulse – wrist crease on the right.
- x weakness of breathing

#### **Useful foods (tonify lung qi and improve ability to absorb gu qi)**

- x Rice (lung color is white)

- x Oats
- x carrots
- x mustard greens
- x sweet potatoes
- x potatoes
- x fresh ginger
- x garlic
- x molasses
- x rice syrup
- x barley malt
- x herring
- x inula root (tea)
- x licorice root
- x General diet
  - ✓ mostly cooked foods (cold and raw foods produce mucus if you have a weak spleen)
  - ✓ Avoid cooling foods and foods that create mucus (oj, or salt for example)
  - ✓ Avoid milk and other dairy
  - ✓ Cooling foods like swiss chard, seaweeds, spinach, cereal grasses (barley)
  - ✓ “Tonify earth to nourish metal”
  - ✓ Response to treatment is gradual

## **Lung Yin Deficiency**

General yin deficiency – lung deficiency with heat signs.

### **Cause:**

Long term deficiency of fluids, the lungs aren't being cooled down and nourished.

Chronic lung infection

Almost any chronic problem can exhaust the yin

### **Symptoms**

- x marked ill health (they don't look healthy)
- x emaciation – dried out and unhealthy
- x lung weakness signs such as
  - ✓ dry cough with little phlegm; phlegm may contain blood (deficiency heat)
  - ✓ Overheat at night (night sweats)
  - ✓ Malar flush
  - ✓ five-palm heat
  - ✓ insomnia (wake up because they are overheating and sweating)
  - ✓ Dry mouth and throat
  - ✓ “low” hoarse voice
  - ✓ throat is kind of tickly
  - ✓ rapid breathing
  - ✓ Tongue – red, peeled, maybe no coat, perhaps a dry coat
  - ✓ Pulse is rapid and deficient (not strong) Thin or thready pulse.

### ***Causes:***

- x Deficiency of body fluids can cause a dryness in the lungs
- x Lung qi deficiency over a long period of time
- x Anything that causes lung qi deficiency over a long period of time.
- x It can be transferred from the stomach (yin deficiency in the stomach can cause lung yin deficiency).

### ***Treatment principle: nourish the lung yin (all yin)***

clear the deficiency heat

### ***Useful Foods:***

- x seaweeds (cooling and moistening)
- x Irish moss
- x Spirulina (green-blue algae)
- x Microalgae
- x Oranges
- x Peaches
- x Pears
- x Watermelon
- x apples
- x tomatoes
- x banana
- x stringbeans
- x soymilk
- x tofu
- x flax seed
- x butter and other dairy products
- x eggs
- x oysters
- x clams
- x pork
- x herbs
  - ✓ marshmallow root
  - ✓ slippery elm
  - ✓ solomon seal (tea)
  - ✓ Lilly bulb root
  - ✓ root romania root

This problem takes a while to resolve. It takes constant effort and treatments. Stay away from warming spices. Don't use bitter herbs. (echinacea, burdock root, etc..)