

## Chinese medicine

Using Chinese medicine to treat illnesses is quite common in Hong Kong. Most people believe Chinese medicine has no side effects so it can be taken freely. But in fact, all drugs are toxic and can cause different side effects when used over a long period.

Combining Chinese and Western medicines properly may increase the effect. But some combinations produce the opposite impact. They may increase the drugs' toxicity, worsen the illness and even endanger life. People are therefore advised not to take Chinese and Western medicines together.

When consuming Chinese medicine, they should also avoid certain foods such as raw, cold, spicy or greasy food. If your digestive system is weak, avoid beans and meat.

Following is the correct way to decoct (extract flavour by boiling) Chinese medicine:

- Use earthenware pots, or glass pots, for the decocting process;
- Cut the drugs into small pieces before decocting;
- Soak the drugs in cold water before putting them in the pot. Flowers, leaves and stems should be soaked for between 20 and 30 minutes, while roots, fruit and seeds for at least one hour.
- The water level in the pot should initially be higher than that of the drugs by between one and two inches at the start of the decocting process.
- When the water is boiling, reduce the heat and continue boiling for another 20 - 30 minutes until the liquid's level falls to between 200 and 300mls.

Chinese medicine is normally taken twice a day – in the morning and at night. But medical advice should be followed for some medicines.