External Treatment of Trauma

using Spring Wind plasters, compresses, and ointments

Whereas the internal treatment of traumatic injury is guided by the *stage* of injury/recovery, (See our paper *The Internal Treatment of Traumatic Injury*) external treatment, such as the application of salves, plasters, soaks and compresses, should be matched to the *clinical manifestations* of the injury. Plasters are generally used in first and early second stage of trauma, while compresses, since they can be applied while warm, are generally used in the second and third stages of trauma. One excellent use of Soak/Compresses is for treating patients who have just had a cast removed and suffer from stiffness and aching. Some of these products for external use have broader application than issues relating directly to trauma. Soak/Compress #11, for instance, can be used to dissolve calcifications and shrink swellings, while many of the others can be used to treat arthritic pain.

Plasters

Soft Plaster Stage 1 #SWSPSI *First Stage*

- This formula is well balanced. It dissipates swelling, moves blood and qi and clears heat.

Soft Plaster #3 #SWSP3 *Dissipation*

- For 1st stage trauma, when pain is secondary to **swelling.**

Soft Plaster #4 #SWSP4 *Double-cooling*

- Best when **heat and rubor** are prominent. This plaster can be combined with any of the other plasters to make them colder.

Soft Plaster #5 #SWSP5 *Tri-color*

- This one is warm and therefore **NOT** for first stage trauma. Use when **cold and damp** are predominating factors in the pain. It has a secondary function to assist the healing of tears in ligaments and tendons.

Soft Plaster #6 #SWSP6 *Blood-quickening*

- Also warm. Similar to #5. Use when there is **pain and swelling, but little or no heat.** A standard 2nd stage trauma plaster.

Soft Plaster # 7 #SWSP7 *Sinew-soothing*

- More neutral in temperature. Use when heat and swelling are not significant but there is **persistent pain and aching.**

Soak / Compresses

Soak/Compress #8 (Ma's Post-trauma Soak/Compress)
The most neutral/generic of the soak/compresses. It is a combination of # 9 and #10.

Soak/Compress #9 (Pain-relieving Soak/Compress)
Focuses on the pain of 2nd stage trauma (no heat.) It is general for **wind-damp *bi* syndrome** and is useful to repair tissue damage.

Soak/Compress #10 (Stasis-dissipating Soak/Compress)
Special for sharp pain. The strongest one for moving blood and relieving pain. Can be used for deep bruises with dark purple color.

Soak/Compress #11 (Eight Immortals Hardness-dissipating Decoction)
Can be used for **hot or cold type wind-damp *bi* syndrome.** Softens hardness and dissipates masses such as calcification, cysts, etc.

Soak/Compress #12 (Joint Injury Soak/Compress)
Warming. Especially for chronic soreness and aches in tendons and ligaments. Stronger to move blood than #13. While it is particularly suited for joints, this formula is best used on fleshy areas.

Soak/Compress #13 (Sinew-penetrating Soak/Compress)
Warmer than #12, contains *ma huang* and *fu zi*. Used for *bi* syndrome that is noticeably worse in cold.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE OF SOFT PLASTERS

1. Spread soft plaster evenly on gauze. The plaster should be spread to a thickness of about ⅛ inch.
2. Place the dressing on the affected area and secure with medical tape or with a gauze bandage. Do not apply the dressing too tightly; it should maintain contact with the skin but not hinder circulation or cause pain.
3. Change dressing daily.
4. Soft plasters may stain clothing, bedding or other fabric. You may want to cover the dressing with an old sock, T-shirt, or even plastic wrap.
5. Discontinue use and consult your practitioner if redness or irritation of the skin develops.
6. (Optional: before applying the soft plaster to the gauze, you may add a capful of **Dr. Shir's Liniment** to the plaster and stir into the top portion of the plaster. After you use up that portion of the plaster, stir in another capful of **Dr. Shir's Liniment**. This both enhances the efficacy of the plaster and makes it easier to spread.)
7. (Optional: before applying the soft plaster to the gauze, you may peel back the top layer of the gauze, apply the soft plaster inside and fold the top layer back into place to make a sandwich. Apply the gauze with the single-layer side facing down on the affected area. This method is a tidier alternative.)

DIRECTIONS FOR USE OF SOAK/COMPRESSES

1. **As Steam Soak:** Place herb pack in 4 cups of water and bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for 25 minutes. Immediately place herb pack in appropriate basin and hold affected limb over the steaming liquid, drape towel over the limb to keep in steam. When decoction cools, bathe limb in the liquid, immersing the traumatized area if possible. Do this 2 times per day. To enhance the effects of the soak, add 2 tablespoons of rice wine to the water at the beginning of the steam. Liquid can be re-used and re-heated for up to 3-4 days.
2. **As a Compress:** When it is not possible to soak a traumatized area such as the shoulder, you will need to use a compress. Cook the pouch in 2 cups of water, bring to a boil and simmer for 25 minutes. Remove the bag. As soon as it has cooled enough to place on the skin, place it over the traumatized area, covering with a hot pack or hot water bottle to keep in heat. Leave on for about 25 minutes. You can also add 2 tablespoons of rice wine to the hot water before taking out the pouch to enhance the effects. After use, compress and the water it was cooked in can be placed together in a container and stored in the refrigerator. Compress & liquid can be re-used and re-heated for up to 3-4 days.

Soaks and compresses penetrate the tissues and leave them open for a while after treatment. It is therefore important to keep the area covered after application to avoid invasion of wind and cold.

It is advisable to follow up a steam soak or compress treatment with one of the three products below:

Spring Wind Amber Massage Salve

Moves blood, moistens skin and clears heat. This salve can be used whenever massage is appropriate. It was designed as a massage lubricant, but can be rubbed into bruises, strains, sprains, inflexible tendons, and can treat numbness and peripheral neuropathy. It is very good right after a steam soak or compress treatment.

Dr. Shir's Liniment

This formula has been handed down from the Shao Lin Temple. It can treat all stages of trauma. It moves blood, dispels wind-damp and is balanced for pain and swelling. Rub liniments very lightly in a circular motion on affected area for 15 minutes, then cover to protect area from external invasion. **Dr. Shir's Liniment** contains grain alcohol and can be drying. This makes it highly effective for stiff joints or pain that is fixed in a small area, but for large areas, especially when dry skin is a problem, we recommend **Spring Wind Muscle and Joint Rub**. **Dr. Shir's Liniment** can be added to soft plasters to improve their action and make them easier to spread.

Spring Wind Muscle And Joint Rub

This lotion soothes aching muscles and sore joints; it quickens blood, clears heat, dispels wind, moves qi, dissipates swelling, and relieves pain. **Muscle and Joint Rub** can be applied to sprains, strains, arthritis, tendonitis, stiff muscles and joints, bi patterns, and other musculo-skeletal disorders. It is an excellent massage lubricant and can cover large areas without leaving a greasy residue. It is available in both warm and cool formulations.