

# Combined TCM & Western Medicine Treatment for Chronic Kidney Disease

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## FOREWORD

Patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) initially are without specific symptoms. As the kidney function decreases, they begin to have symptoms such as foamy urine, edema, sore lower back, hypertension, and anemia. This occurs at an early stage of CKD. People should be cautious if the following long-term symptoms are observed, as they are early warning of kidney disease: lower limb or eyelid edema, severe frequent nocturnal enuresis, and foamy urine after waking up in the morning.

The causative risk factors of CKD are:

1. Metabolic disorders: Such as diabetes, gout, and amyloidosis; among these, diabetic nephropathy is the most common cause of chronic renal failure.
2. Various types of primary glomerulonephritis.
3. Various types of secondary glomerulonephritis, such as secondary nephritis caused by lupus or a tumor. Renal failure caused by lupus is more commonly seen.
4. Nephrosclerosis caused by long term hypertension and arteriosclerosis.
5. Autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease.
6. Obstructive nephropathy: Long-term urinary tract blockage causes damage to kidney tissues. Once it reaches the stage of chronic renal failure, even if the cause of the blockage can be removed, normal kidney function can never be resumed.
7. Chronic interstitial nephritis: Possibly due to long-term intake of analgesics or renal tuberculosis.



## DIAGNOSIS OF CKD

### Western Medicine

#### Diagnosis:

CKD is classified into the following five stages:

- Stage I: (Follow-up once every 6 months)

Normal kidney function with traces of proteinuria. GFR:  $\geq 90$  ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>.

- Stage II: (Follow up once every 6 months)

Mild chronic renal failure. GFR: 60-89 ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>.

- Stage III: (Follow up once every 3 months)

Moderate chronic renal failure. GFR: 30-59 ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>.

- Stage IV: (Follow up once every 3 months)

Severe chronic renal failure. GFR: 15-29 ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>.

- Stage V: (Follow up once every 2-4 weeks)

End-stage renal disease. GFR:  $< 15$  ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>.

### TCM Symptom Diagnosis

TCM classifies CKD into the following patterns by pattern differentiation:

1. Spleen-kidney *Yang* deficiency

Symptoms: Pale complexion, fatigue and lack of strength, small appetite, bloated abdomen, fear of cold with cold limbs, cold pain of low back and



knees, long clear nighttime urination, impotence, diarrhea with undigested food, or diarrhea before dawn. The tongue is swollen, pale with teeth marks with a thin tongue coating. The pulse is thin, weak or deep.

#### 2. Liver-kidney *Yin* deficiency

Symptoms: Red cheeks, vexing heat in the five centers, dizziness and headache, dry eyes, deafness or tinnitus, dry mouth and throat, weak sore low back and knees, insomnia with profuse dreaming. The tongue is red with a scanty coating. The pulse is thin, wiry, and rapid.

#### 3. *Qi* and blood deficiency

Symptoms: Withered-yellow complexion, respiratory weakness and laziness to talk, fatigue and lack of strength, spontaneous sweating, dizziness, pale lips, numbness of the limbs, and palpitations and insomnia. The tongue is pale and tender. The pulse is thin and weak.

#### 4. *Yin* and *Yang* deficiency

Symptoms: Edema, fear of cold with cold limbs, dull dark complexion, loose stool or constipation, clear long nighttime urination or scanty yellow urination, feverish feeling in the palms and soles, and insomnia with night sweating. The tongue is pale, swollen with very little saliva and teeth marks. The pulse is thin or rapid.

#### 5. Cold-turbidity encumbering the spleen

Symptoms: Respiratory weakness and lack of strength, dull complexion, nausea and vomiting, aversion to food and a bloated abdomen, full body edema, scanty urination and loose stool. The tongue is big swollen and pale (jade-pale) with a thin greasy coating. The pulse is deep thin or soggy thin.

#### 6. Heat-turbidity invading the stomach

Symptoms: Fatigue and lack of strength, nausea and retching or frequent vomiting, poor appetite and digestion, bloated abdomen, and constipation. The tongue is red with a yellow greasy or dry rough tongue coating. The pulse is either thin rapid or wiry rapid.

#### 7. Kidney water pathogen attacking the heart

Symptoms: Palpitations and chest tightness, shortness of breath and unable to lie flat, cold body and limbs, dripping with a lot of sweat, and loss of consciousness. *Yin* deficiency symptoms with vexing heat in the five centers and flushing red cheeks.

The tongue is pale with a thin coating. The pulse is faint, thin, feeble or hidden, deep.

#### 8. Heat-turbidity trapping the heart

Symptoms: Loss of consciousness, irritable and restless, bleeding nose and gingival atrophy, bloody urine and stool, purple spots on the skin, stiff tongue and not talking, and anuria in severe cases. The tongue is red with char-yellow coating. The pulse is thin, rapid or knotted, intermittent.

#### 9. Heat-turbidity invading the liver

Symptoms: Anuria, trembling fingers, trembling or curled tongue, headache and dizziness, skin that is atrophying, irritable and restless, loss of consciousness in severe cases, and convulsions of the limbs. The tongue is either red and dry or yellow and dry without saliva. The pulse is thin, wiry, and rapid.

#### 10. Phlegm-turbidity clouding the orifices

Symptoms: Sullied and stagnant complexion, dementia, distorted or unclear speech, deep coma in severe cases, mostly there is no fever, silent without vexation, gurgling phlegm noise, and nausea and vomiting. The tongue has either a white greasy or grey greasy coating. The pulse is deep and slippery.

The above patterns may include different symptoms of the



different stages of CKD.

## TCM AND WESTERN MEDICINE COMBINED TREATMENT

### Confrontational Therapy

First consider whether the condition is fatal or severely acute. When there is uremia at the fifth stage of CKD, all activities should be stopped immediately in order to receive immediate dialysis treatment necessary to avoid further damage such as hyperkalemia or sudden death.

### Symptomatic Therapy

#### 1. Medication Therapy:

- Avoid any possible factors that worsen renal function, such as: drug abuse (steroids, cold liquid medicine, analgesics, X-ray contrast agents, certain antibiotics, drugs of unknown origin, etc.), dehydration, heart failure, hypotension or shock, urinary tract obstruction, infection, or electrolyte imbalance.
- Treat the primary disease, such as: diabetes or autoimmune glomerulonephritis.
- Strict control of hypertension: If proteinuria is more than 1 gram per day, the treatment target should be 125/75mm Hg. If the proteinuria is less than 1 gram per day, the treatment target should be 130/85mm Hg. Appropriate exercise also helps control blood pressure.
- If the patient is not at the stage of severe renal failure yet (eg: serum creatinine less than 4mg/dl), then angiotensin-converting-enzyme inhibitor (ACEI) or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) can be used for treatment. To reduce proteinuria: Controlling hypertension and using ACEI both have good therapeutic effects.

#### 2. TCM Treatment:

- Spleen-kidney *Yang* deficiency:  
Treatment Method: Supplement *Qi* and fortify the spleen, warm the kidney, and assist *Yang*.  
Prescription: Modified Four Major Herb Combination (*Si Jun Zi Tang*) and Eucommia & Rehmannia Formula (*You Gui Wan*).
- Liver-kidney *Yin* deficiency:  
Treatment Method: Enrich *Yin* and supplement kidney, nourish liver and subdue *Yang*.  
Prescription: Modified Ophiopogon, Schisandra & Rehmannia Formula (*Mai Wei Di Huang Wan*).



- *Qi* and blood deficiency:  
Treatment Method: Supplement the center and boost *Qi*, nourish blood and calm the heart.  
Prescription: Modified Ginseng & Dang Gui Ten Combination (*Shi Quan Da Bu Tang*).
- *Yin* and *Yang* deficiency:  
Treatment Method: Warm and supplement the kidney *Qi*, regulate and contain *Yin* and *Yang*.  
Prescription: Modified Achyrantes & Plantago Formula (*Ji Sheng Shen Qi Wan*).
- Cold-turbidity encumbering the spleen:  
Treatment Method: Warm and supplement deficiency, direct turbidity downward, and arrest vomiting.  
Prescription: Modified Evodia Combination (*Wu Zhu Yu Tang*) and Citrus & Pinellia Combination (*Er Chen Tang*).
- Heat-turbidity invading the stomach:  
Treatment Method: Reinforce healthy *Qi* and direct counter-flow downward, unblock the bowels and discharge turbidity.  
Prescription: Modified Warm the Spleen Decoction (*Wen Pi Tang*) and Hoelen & Bamboo Combination (*Wen Dan Tang*).
- Kidney water pathogen attacking the heart:  
Treatment Method: Warm *Yang* and promote urination, boost *Qi* and rescue from desertion.  
Prescription: Modified Vitality Combination (*Zhen Wu Tang*) and Ginseng and Aconite Combination (*Shen Fu Tang*).
- Heat-turbidity trapping the heart:  
Treatment Method: Clear heat and resolve toxins, cool the blood and dissipate stasis.  
Prescription: Modified Rhinoceros and Rehmannia Combination (*Xi Jiao Di Huang Tang*).
- Heat-turbidity invading the liver:  
Treatment Method: Calm the liver and extinguish

wind, enrich *Yin* and subdue *Yang*.

Prescription: Modified Sedate the Liver and Extinguish Wind Decoction (*Zhen Gan Xi Feng Tang*).

- Phlegm-turbidity clouding the orifices:  
Treatment Method: Clear up phlegm and open the orifices, harmonize the stomach and direct turbidity downward.  
Prescription: Modified Scour Phlegm Decoction (*Di Tan Tang*).

If CKD patients are also having external pathogens, we treat the branch first:

- Wind-heat: Common cold symptoms such as fever and sore throat; use Lonicera & Forsythia Formula (*Yin Qiao San*) and Morus & Chrysanthemum Combination (*Sang Ju Yin*).
- Wind edema: Swollen eyelids, aversion to wind with fever, sore achy joints and limbs, and inhibited urination; use Atractylodes Combination (*Yue Bi Jia Zhu Tang*).
- Damp-heat: Vexing heat and thirst, red scanty urination or dry constipated stool, and a yellow greasy tongue coating; use Talc & Scute Formula (*Gan Lu Xiao Du Dan*).
- Wind-cold: Cough with clear discharge, thin white tongue coating, and a superficial tight pulse; use Schizonepeta & Siler Formula (*Jing Fang Bai Du San*).

And then, we treat the root:

Because this disease involves multiple organs, we should treat the lung, spleen, and kidney and soothe the liver simultaneously.

- Lung *Qi* insufficiency: Shortness of breath and spontaneous sweating, alternating chills and fever, and tendency to catch cold. We should treat the branch.
- Spleen *Qi* insufficiency: Poor appetite and loose stool, discomfort in the stomach cavity after meals, and withered-yellow complexion. The treatment method is to strengthen the spleen.
- Kidney *Qi* insufficiency: Sore low back and weak knees, frequent clear urination, or urinary incontinence. The treatment method is to supplement the kidney and boost *Qi*.
- Liver fails to govern the free flow of *Qi*: Dizziness and headache, irascibility, and wiry pulse. Treatment method is to soothe the liver. Bupleurum & Peony Formula (*Jia Wei Xiao Yao San*) can be used.

In addition, treatment can be applied according to the different disease mechanisms differentiated according to the eight principles and *Qi*, blood, fluids and essence:

- *Qi* deficiency: Respiratory weakness and lazy to talk, prolapsed of the organs, swollen tongue with wet slippery coating and teeth marks. Four Major Herb Combination (*Si Jun Zi Tang*), Ginseng & Atractylodes Formula (*Shen Ling Bai Zhu San*), or Ginseng & Astragalus Combination (*Bu Zhong Yi Qi Tang*) can be used.
- *Qi* and *Yin* deficiency: Spontaneous sweating and night sweating, dry tongue and throat, and a red tongue. Lotus Seed Combination (*Qing Xin Lian Zi Yin*) can be used.
- *Yin* deficiency: Insomnia and irritability, sores in the mouth and on the tongue, dry throat, and a red dry tongue. Rehmannia Six Formula (*Liu Wei Di Huang Wan*) or Anemarrhena, Phellodendron & Rehmannia Formula (*Zhi Bo Di Huang Wan*) can be used.
- *Qi* deficiency with stasis: Dark red tongue with stasis spots. Astragalus & Peony Combination (*Bu Yang Huan Wu Tang*) can be used.

In short, the principles of prevention and the treatment of CKD are mainly to fortify the spleen and supplement the kidney, boost *Qi* and nourish blood, and invigorate blood and dissolve stasis. Chinese medicine treatment for CKD gets better results when treating CKD at stage 3 when both kidneys do not show atrophy by an ultrasound exam. Chinese medicine treatment can delay the speed of renal function failure, extended the time before dialysis is needed, relieve symptoms, protect residual renal function, slow down the disease progress, and greatly improve the quality of life for CKD patients. According to modern pharmacological studies, Cordyceps (*Dong Chong Xia Cao*), Rhubarb (*Da Huang*), Salvia Root (*Dan Shen*), Ligusticum (*Chuan Xiong*), Ginseng (*Ren Shen*), Astragalus (*Huang Qi*), Epimedium (*Yin Yang Huo*), Angelica (*Dang Gui*), and Notoginseng Root (*San Qi*) all have curative effects via antioxidant, anti-lipid peroxidation, anti-platelet aggregation, anti-inflammatory, anti-fibrotic, immune regulation, and glomerular afferent and arteriole regulation. The combination of these pharmacological mechanisms can slow further deterioration of CKD, and prevent the progress of early chronic kidney disease into end-stage renal disease (uremia) state.

