



## Follow Instructions from Chinese Medicine Practitioners on the use of Herbal Medicines

Before consuming any herbal medicines, one should consult a Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP), follow instructions on decoction, and consume at the suggested time and dosage.

**Consumption should cease upon recovery,** and prolonged use without instruction from CMP should be avoided.



## Purchase Herbal Medicines from Licensed Chinese Herbal Medicine Retailers

Purchasing from **licensed** Chm retailers can ensure the herbal medicines are from reputable suppliers and minimise the risk of acquiring herbal medicines that are improperly processed.



## Rinse the Herbal Medicines Before Decoction

Since **sulphur dioxide is soluble in water**, its residues in the herbal medicines can significantly be reduced after washing, soaking and decoction.

**Herbal medicines should be rinsed under running water to remove dirt on the surface** for hygienic purposes, then soaked thoroughly in water before decoction.

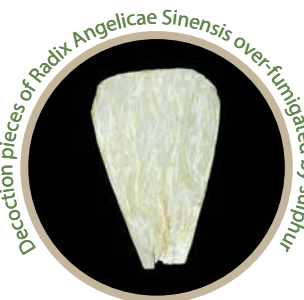


## Do Not Purchase or Consume Herbal Medicines with Overly Bright or White Colours, or Pungent Sour Smell

In general, herbal medicines that have been fumigated by sulphur would have a pungent smell and their colours would appear brighter. An overly pungent sour smell or bright colours may indicate the herbal medicines being excessively fumigated by sulphur. When in doubt, stop consuming and consult healthcare professionals.



Decoction pieces of Radix Angelicae Sinensis not fumigated by sulphur



Decoction pieces of Radix Angelicae Sinensis over-fumigated by sulphur

### Reference for proper decoction method:

[https://www.cmro.gov.hk/html/eng/useful\\_information/public\\_health/pamphlet/Preparing\\_Herbal\\_Decoctions.html](https://www.cmro.gov.hk/html/eng/useful_information/public_health/pamphlet/Preparing_Herbal_Decoctions.html)



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# HERBAL MEDICINES

AND

# SULPHUR DIOXIDE



## Sulphur Fumigation of Herbal Medicines

Sulphur fumigation is a traditional method of processing herbal medicines. Its application can help with **insect killing, mould prevention, bleaching, preservation and anti-oxidation** of herbal medicines, and hence their better storage.



When herbal medicines are fumigated by sulphur dioxide ( $\text{SO}_2$ ) gas produced by burning sulphur, insects in them would be killed and activity of mould could be inhibited. Sulphur dioxide would also combine with water in the herbal medicines to form sulphurous acid then sulphites which possess anti-oxidation effects. These can help with the storage of Chinese herbal medicines (Chm) to a certain extent.

However, **abuse or overuse of sulphur fumigation** not only compromises the quality of herbal medicines but may also be detrimental to health.

## Adverse Effects of $\text{SO}_2$ on Human



In human body,  $\text{SO}_2$  would eventually be converted to sulfates that are excreted via urine. Therefore in general, **intake in small amount through normal consumption will not be harmful to health.**

However, excessive  $\text{SO}_2$  residues may cause harmful effects on health, especially those who have allergic reactions to sulphur dioxide. They may **develop symptoms like shortness of breath, headache or nausea. Long term exposure to excessive sulphur dioxide can also trigger respiratory system disorders.**



## Procure Herbal Medicines from Reputable Suppliers



To ensure the quality, Chinese herbal medicine (Chm) wholesalers should procure from reputable suppliers while Chm retailers should do so from licensed Chm wholesalers. **Do not purchase Chm of doubtful source or quality.** All imported herbal medicines must conform with the regulatory requirements of their places of origin. When in doubt, the supplier should be asked to provide relevant documentary proof of the quality for the concerned herbal medicines.



## Store Herbal Medicines Properly

The herbal medicines should be stored properly according to their quality and medicinal properties. **Sulphur fumigation should not be overly relied upon for insect and mould prevention.** Processed herbal medicines that are accepted upon inspection should be promptly stored with proper record so that the stock can be dispatched according to the "first-in, first-out" principle.