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point of view, this is the time when mugwort leaf is the best quality for use. From a theoretical point of view, since mugwort floss is "pure yang" according to Li Shizhen, it is best picked at the time of the year when yang is increasing (the vernal equinox) or when yang is at its peak (summer solstice).

Mugwort should be harvested after the bottom of the leaf has developed a woolly feeling (Ellis, Wiseman, and Boss 1991, 22). It is then sun-dried, ground or crumbled, and sifted repeatedly until all that is left is a soft fibrous material resembling cotton balls. The more it is sifted and the longer it is aged, the higher the grade. The best moxa wool is very pale tan. The coarser the grade, the greener and darker the color will be. High-grade moxa wool is easily shaped, burns smoothly, and can be made into tiny thread-like cones. It is used in direct moxibustion. Lower grades are used on top of isolating materials, in mugwort sticks, or burned in moxibustion devices (O'Connor and Bensky 1981, 438).

1. Mugwort cone moxibustion

When moxa wool is rolled or shaped between the fingers, it can be made into "cones." There are two words for moxa cones in Chinese. "Cone" is not a literal translation of either word. *Zhuangzi* is a "number word" and is used only to state the number of cones. It literally means "strong, able-bodied, or healthy" (Mathews 1943, 205). To say "three cones" of moxibustion (三灸) is actually to say "three strengthenings" or "three invigorations."

The form of the cone is denoted by *zhu*, which also means the wick of an oil lamp or candle, or a stick of incense (Mathews 1943, 189). Although the shape is often cone-like, sometimes a moxa "cone" resembles a short thread or piece of string.

The old Chinese texts often specified the size of a cone by comparing it to a common object rather than using a unit of measurement. Cones vary from the size of a grain of millet to as large as the top of the thumb. Chen Yanzhi (Southern and Northern dynasties) stated that the base of a moxa cone should be three fen in diameter. This was quoted by many later doctors, including Sun Simiao (Tang) and Gong Yanxian (Ming). Generally, direct moxibustion requires smaller cones that are made of higher grade mugwort than indirect moxibustion.

The number of cones is also variable, depending on the condition of the patient, the location on the body where treatment is applied, and the philosophy of the doctor. Recommendations range from one to one thousand cones. In surveying the literature, larger numbers of cones are generally used for urgent conditions, on the back and abdomen, and for supplementation. Fewer cones are used in non-urgent situations (especially due to depletion), on the head and limbs, and when the patient has a heat condition. Doctors who favor warm supplementation tend to use more cones.

Occasionally powdered medicinals are added to the moxa wool before it is made into cones. An example of this is found in *Zhu* Danxi’s *Heart Methods of Treatment*.2

*Direct moxibustion:* For direct moxibustion, burn cones directly on the skin. There are different degrees of stimulation:

- **Non-scarring moxibustion:** Remove the mugwort cones before they burn close to the skin. The patient feels warmth and the area becomes red, but the flesh is not damaged. Use non-scarring moxibustion for vacuity cold patterns (He 2003, 33).

- **Blistering moxibustion:** Burn small thread-like cones to the flesh, but do not allow deep

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2《丹溪心法·卷二·咽喉》 Yuan dynasty (Zhu 2000, 186).
damage. A blister will form although no scar remains after it heals. Apply blistering moxibustion for chronic vacuity cold patterns, such as asthma, dizziness, diarrhea, and warts (He 2003, 33).

- **Scarring moxibustion:** This is also called suppurating moxibustion and is the most intense type. Larger cones are burned down to the flesh, although these cones are not as large as those used in indirect moxibustion. This leaves a larger blister, and pus may form before the sore heals. Scarring moxibustion is used to treat asthma, scrofula, consumption, lumps and accumulations, epilepsy, open sores, and chronic gastrointestinal diseases. It is applied to prevent wind stroke in patients with high blood pressure. It is also used to prevent disease and promote longevity in healthy people (He 2003, 33-4).

Traditionally, most doctors believed that without blistering or scarring, the treatment would not be effective. Today, few in the West dare to use this type of treatment.

- **Indirect moxibustion:** In indirect moxibustion, an isolating substance is placed between the cone and the skin. This is generally less painful and a blister or scar is less likely, although it is not impossible. A variety of substances are used, such as ginger, garlic, Fu Zi (Radix Lateralis Aconiti) slices, or salt. Powdered substances are sometimes made into a cake to isolate the moxa cone from the skin. The cake or slice is usually the thickness of a coin. Small holes are punched into the isolating substance to help the smoke, heat, and mugwort qi penetrate into the skin. The cake or slice is changed every few cones when it dries up or becomes charred.

The properties of the isolating substance are thought to affect the treatment, although in some cases an isolating substance is used simply to moderate the amount of heat stimulation. Today, it is common to find self-adhesive moxa on a neutral isolating base. You can also buy “skin shields” to further isolate the self-adhesive moxa cones (Lhasa OMS catalogue 2003-4, 33).

The uses of indirect moxibustion are extensive and depend, in part, on the properties of the isolating substance. For example, moxibustion on garlic is used for abscesses, sores that have not ulcerated, toxic swellings, consumption, abdominal lumps and accumulations, and snake bites. Salt is used as an isolating substance to return yang, stem counterflow or desorption, and to treat acute abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhea, dysentery, reversal cold of the limbs, and strangury (He 2003, 37-40).

2. **Mugwort stick moxibustion**

Mugwort wool is packed and rolled up in paper to make a stick that resembles a cigar or a large cigarette. The moxa wool is often mixed with other medicinals. The stick is lit and held near the skin or is sometimes used with an isolating substance (He 2003, 60, 62, 64).

- **Pure mugwort stick moxibustion:** In this case, mugwort alone is rolled into a stick.

  - **Hand-held moxibustion:** This is the most common method of moxibustion used in the clinic today (Ellis, Wiseman, and Boss 1991, 24). Moxa rolls are convenient. They can be bought ready-made, so there is no need to roll cones or sticks or prepare isolating substances. There is less chance of burns because the amount of heat is fairly easy to control. Patients can easily be taught to use moxa sticks at home (He 2003, 60).

  - **Gentle moxibustion:** Hold the moxa stick over an area or point to gently warm it. Redness will appear but there should be no blister or scarring (Cheng 1987, 343). Use this method to warm and unblock the channels
and vessels, scatter cold and eliminate evils. It is more frequently used in chronic diseases (He 2003, 61).

- **Circling moxibustion**: Move the stick in circles over the area to be warmed. Use this method to warm an area rather than a point. Apply it for wind damp impedance, paralysis, and skin diseases (He 2003, 61).

- **Sparrow-pecking moxibustion**: Raise the stick up and down over the point or area to be warmed. Focus on a point or small area so that the heat penetrates more easily (O’Connor and Bensky 1981, 442). It is used more often in acute diseases, clouding reversal, malposition of the fetus, insufficient lactation, etc. (He 2003, 61).

- **Isolating substance moxibustion**: Even with moxa rolls, sometimes isolating substances are used.

- **Walnut shell moxibustion**: A walnut shell is cracked in two and the meat is removed. Three to five small holes are drilled into each half of the shell. The inside is filled with chicken manure. It is placed upside down on the affected site. A mugwort stick is lit and applied over the holes in the shell. This method is said to resolve toxins, disperse swelling, and check pain (He 2003, 61-2).

Since the 1970s, walnut shells with holes are dipped in Ju Hua (Flos Chrysanthemi) water and then joined to eyeglass frames. Pieces of moxa sticks are attached to the outside and burned. Chrysanthemum has an affinity for the eyes. The walnut shells suggest the brain. The qi of walnut and chrysanthemum is thought to enter the body through the eyes and benefit the brain and the eyes (Unschuld 2000, 86). This method is used to treat various eye problems and paralysis of the eye muscles (He 2003, 61-2).

- **Warm needle moxibustion**: Moxibustion can be applied to the handle of an acupuncture needle. There are many ways to do this. Slice a moxa stick and place the slices on the handle of a needle that has been inserted into a point. The needle must be relatively thick and inserted deeply in order to hold the additional weight on the handle. The handle must be metal and not plastic. The heat of the moxibustion travels through the needle into the point (He 2003, 63-4).

Others simply hold a moxa stick and warm the area of the needle insertion.

Some doctors pack mugwort wool on the handle of the needle and ignite it. You can also buy metal caps that hold the moxa wool. These caps sit on the handle of the needle and protect the skin from falling ash (Lhasa OMS catalogue 2003-4, 36).

The warm needle is used to treat many types of disease, including wind, cold, and damp impedance, menstrual block, lumbar pain, impotence, prolapse of the rectum, and facial paralysis (He 2003, 64).

- **Moxa sticks with other medicinals added**: Doctors design recipes of powdered medicinals to add to the mugwort roll. Different formulas are prescribed to treat various types of illness. Examples of the names of these sticks are “thunder-fire miraculous needle,” “taiyi miraculous needle,” and “needle that emits a

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3 Chicken manure has been used as a medicinal for millennia. It was used in a formula in Elementary Questions, Chapter 40, for example (Wu and Wu 1997, 196).
hundred miracles" (He 2003, 64-7). Later, a few types will be discussed in detail.

If the sticks are handmade, they can be formulated for the condition of a patient. This was common in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Moxa sticks were highly regarded at that time, as is evident by their names, almost all including the word shen: "miraculous, spiritual, god-like." Today, moxa sticks are commercially manufactured and seem to be used more for convenience than because they are highly regarded.

At the present, one can buy pure moxa sticks, a few types of sticks with other medicinals added, and also what is called "smokeless moxa sticks" (Lhasa OMS catalogue 2003-4, 35). These are sticks of charcoal that have been infused with mugwort and sometimes other medicinals. They emit less smoke and odor (Dharmamanda 2004, 15-16).

3. Mugwort cake moxibustion
Mugwort wool is shaped and packed until it has the appearance of a cake. The cakes of mugwort are applied to a site in conjunction with an external heat source. The heat penetrates through the mugwort wool and percutaneous into the flesh (He 2003, 68). There are two types of mugwort cake moxibustion:

► Ironing moxibustion: Here, the mugwort cake is placed on a point or an area such as the abdomen. The cake is covered with a few layers of cloth. Then it is ironed or a hot-water bottle is placed on top. The patient should feel an appropriate amount of heat. This method is suitable for wind, cold, or damp impediment, vomiting, abdominal pain due to cold, diarrhea, etc. (He 2003, 68).

Since the heat source is often a hot iron, this method is also considered an aspect of the heat treatment called ironing⁴ (He 2003, 68).

► Sunbeam moxibustion: This is similar to the previous method, but the external heat source is the sun. Usually, the treatment lasts 10-20 minutes. You must be careful to avoid overexposure, such as sunburn, heat stroke, or sun stroke. You can also use a heat lamp. This method is suitable for wind, cold, or damp impediment, the five types of slow development in children, and chronic diseases with vacuity and weakness (He 2003, 68).

4. Mugwort-fuming moxibustion
This is the application of smoke from burning or steam from boiling mugwort wool to treat a point or affected area. The steam or smoke must be below the area to be treated (He 2003, 68).

► Smoke-fuming moxibustion: Place the mugwort wool in a fireproof container and light it. The smoke treats the affected site or point. This method is also called “warm cup moxibustion.” It is used to treat wind, cold, or damp impediment or wilting (He 2003, 69).

► Steam moxibustion: Boil mugwort wool or a leaf in a container with water. Place the affected site or point in the rising steam. This treats wind, cold, or damp impediment, abdominal pain due to vacuity cold, distention, fullness, and diarrhea (He 2003, 69).

5. Warming device moxibustion
Various devices are manufactured to hold burning moxa wool, sticks, or cones:

► Warming cylinder moxibustion: This is a metal can or cylinder with small holes to let air in and smoke out. The cylinder may have a flat or a pointed bottom. Use the flat-bottom cylinder for larger areas and the pointed-
bottom cylinder to direct the treatment to specific points or angular locations. The device often has a handle to make it easier to hold or move over the affected site or targeted point (O’Connor and Bensky 1981, 442). Warming cylinder moxibustion treats wind, cold, and damp impediment, abdominal pain or distention, diarrhea, wilting, etc. (He 2003, 70).

- **Warming box moxibustion**: Use a metal box with a screen across the bottom. Burn the moxa inside. This device is used to warm a larger area of the body (O’Connor and Bensky 1981, 442). Cover the skin with a cloth to prevent burns from the hot metal box. Then place the box on the affected area. The warming box is used for menstrual pain, lumbar pain, epigastric pain, enuresis, seminal emission, impotence, and diarrhea (He 2003, 70-1).

- **Reed tube moxibustion**: A reed (or bamboo) tube is used to apply moxibustion in the ear. This technique was first described in the early Tang dynasty by Sun Simiao in Volume 26 of Supplement to Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold (He 2003, 71). Tube moxibustion is the forerunner of the warming cylinder (O’Connor and Bensky 1981, 400).

At the present, there are two types of tube moxibustion. In one, the diameter of the tube’s opening is about a half centimeter, and the tube is five or six centimeters long. One end is cut into the shape of half a duck’s bill. Adhesive is applied to the other end to seal it when it is inserted into the external auditory meatus (He 2003, 71).

The second type of device consists of two sections of reed. One section is relatively larger in diameter, about 0.8-1.0 centimeter, and is four centimeters long. One end is cut into a “duck bill.” The other section is smaller, with a diameter of about 0.5-0.6 centimeters, and is about three centimeters long. One end is inserted into the external auditory meatus and the other end goes into the larger tube. Again, adhesive is used to seal it (He 2003, 71).

In either type, a pinch of mugwort the size of a half of a peanut is placed in the “duck bill” and lit. Three to nine cones are applied until the ear feels warm. This method is used to treat facial paralysis, dizziness, tinnitus, etc. (He 2003, 71).

**Moxibustion Using Other Medicinals (Non-Mugwort Moxibustion)**

Although mugwort is the most common material used for moxibustion, other materials have been used historically and in clinical practice today.

1. **Moxibustion by burning medicinals**

Many substances have been burned for moxibustion, including sulfur, hot wax, incense, Deng Xin Cao (Medulla Junici), and peach or mulberry twigs (He 2003, 72-80).

For example, a chunk of sulfur can be burned on a fistula or boil (Wang 1984, 5).

Juncus moxibustion is usually used on children. A stalk is dipped in oil and lit. Then the burning end is applied to a point or area (Wang 1984, 5). Juncus moxibustion is still used in clinics of China. **Chinese Acupuncture and Moxibustion** recommends it in the treatment of mumps (Cheng 1987, 472).

Mulberry or peach twigs can be lit and then blown out so that the end of the twig becomes a burning ember. The twig is then touched to carbuncles, sores, or ulcers (Wang 1984, 6).
2. Moxibustion without burning medicinals

This is the application of a medicinal paste to the skin without any use of fire or mugwort. The medicinals may be applied to an acupuncture point or locally to the affected site. Generally, acid, warm or hot medicinals that contain irritating volatile oils are used (Flaws 2003, 2). The effect depends on the nature of the medicinal that is employed.

- **Heavenly moxibustion (blistering):** Heavenly moxibustion is the application of medicinals to irritate the skin enough to cause blistering. These medicinals include Bai Jie Zi (Semem Sinapis), Da Suan (Bulbus Alii Sativi, garlic), Wei Ling Xian (Radix Clematidis), Cang Bai (Bulbus Allii Fistulosi, scallion white), Ba Dou (Semem Crotonis), Ban Mao (Mylabirs), Mao Gen Ye (Folium Runcunci Japinici), and Ban Xia (Rhizoma Pinelliae) (He 2003, p.81-84).

- **Medicinal application moxibustion (non-blistering):** This is the application of less irritating medicinals to the skin; no blisters erupt. This category includes Ma Qian Zi (Semem Strychnoris), Tian Nan Xing (Rhzozma Arisaematis), Gan Sui (Radix Euphobiae Kanul), Wu Zhu Yu (Fructus Evodiae), Fu Zi (Radix Lateralis Aconiti), Xi Xin (Herba Asari), Bo He (Herba Menthae Haplocalyces), Ya Dan Zi (Fructus Brucceae Javanicae), Wu Bei Zi (Gallus Rhois), Bi Ma Zi (Semem Rici Communis), and Tao Ren (Semem Persciae) (He 2003, 84-87). "Liquid moxa," a solution with mugwort and possibly other medicinals can be purchased. It is applied to a point or area, often in combination with electric heat treatment (Flaws 2003, 2-3).

3. Electrical moxibustion

These techniques are, of course, a modern invention.

- **Electrical heat moxibustion:** Heat lamps or other sources of electric heat are applied to the surface of the body. In the earliest stage of its development, doctors used an external heat source with an electric fan aimed at the point, but the strength of the heat was insufficient to penetrate. Today, people use specially made electrical moxibustion devices. Some are similar to a regular lamp, but are designed to emit particular types of radiation, such as infra-red. The amount of heat is relatively focused, the area that directly receives the heat is relatively small, and the strength of the heat is sufficient to penetrate into the flesh. A treatment usually lasts about 10-15 minutes (He 2003, 88).

- **Electrical warm needle moxibustion:** Electrical heat combined with acupuncture mimics the warming needle. The difference between this and electro-acupuncture is that heat, not electrical current, is the goal. Points are selected based on the disease or pattern. The points are needled and after qi sensation is obtained, the electrical warm needle moxibustion equipment is applied for 15-30 minutes. This is appropriate for many patterns, including impeding, wind stroke, asthma, abdominal pain, and infertility (He 2003, 88).

- **Other types of electrical moxibustion:** Today, some use experimental techniques to apply moxibustion using various types of waves, such as light, laser, and ultrasound.