Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) was originally developed to treat a simultaneous taiyang and shaoyang disturbance. Because of this, the guiding principle for proper application of this formula is to look for some corroborating signs/symptoms from both stages. The long list from the General Indications and Modern Applications section on the next page is valid as long as the patient presents with at least one primary sign/symptom from the taiyang stage and one primary sign/symptom from the shaoyang stage. Additional support for the pattern diagnosis can be found from any of the three sections in the table below. That is, additional primary taiyang signs/symptoms, additional primary shaoyang signs/symptoms, or any of the secondary signs and symptoms. Generally speaking, three or more total signs/symptoms from the table below will be present in the pattern, with at least one each from the two primary columns.

What makes this formula so interesting and versatile is that none of the above needs to be the main complaint for the formula to be effective. As long as an underlying pattern of both taiyang and shaoyang can be confirmed from the table above, Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) is likely to be effective, often surprisingly so.

### Traditional Actions

1. Harmonizes shaoyang
2. Releases the exterior (taiyang)
3. Harmonizes nutritive (ying) and protective (wei) qi

### Ingredients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PINYIN</th>
<th>LATIN</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
<th>PERCENT OF FORMULA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chai Hu</td>
<td>Bupleuri ( radix)</td>
<td>Bupleurum Root</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dang Shen</td>
<td>Codonopsis Pilosae ( radix)</td>
<td>Codonopsis Root</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhi Ban Sha</td>
<td>Pinelliae ( rhizoma preparatum)</td>
<td>Pinellia, ginger-cured</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gui Zhi</td>
<td>Cinnamomi ( ramulus)</td>
<td>Cinnamon Twig, Cassia Twig</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang Qin</td>
<td>Scutellariae ( radix)</td>
<td>Chinese Scullcap, Scutellaria, Scute</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bai Shao</td>
<td>Paeoniae alba ( radix)</td>
<td>White Peony Root</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheng Jiang</td>
<td>Zingiberis ( rhizoma recens)</td>
<td>Fresh Ginger Rhizome</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da Zao / Hong Zao</td>
<td>Jujubae ( fructus)</td>
<td>Jujube, Chinese Red Date</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gan Cao</td>
<td>Glycyrrhiza ( radix)</td>
<td>Licorice Root</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Formula Actions**
- Harmonizes shaoyang
- Harmonizes nutritive (ying) and protective (wei) qi

**Tongue**
Dark red or dusky-pale body, thin, white or greasy, yellow coat.

**Pulse**
May be wiry in the guan position; may be floating and forceless.

**Contraindications*/Caution*/s**
Avoid cold, raw, and oily foods while taking Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula. Do not use if the pattern is yin deficiency or if there is excess above with deficiency below. Do not use in the absence of concurrent shaoyang and taiyang signs. This formula has been shown to act synergistically with anticonvulsive drugs.

**Dosage**
Usually, 2 tablets, 3 times a day should suffice in chronic disorders. For acute or severe symptoms or with larger persons, dosage may need to be increased to 3-5 tablets per dose. It is advantageous to allow the formula to promote sweating after ingesting. Classically, this meant taking the formula, then getting under covers in a bed. This advice is still sound today.

A “spirit dosage” (1/2 to 1 tablet, 2-3 times per day) is often preferred when treating psychological/psychiatric issues.

**General Indications /* Modern Applications**
- Abdominal pain and distention
- Acid reflux
- Allergies
- Amenorrhea
- Anxiety disorder
- Appendicitis, chronic
- Appetite, poor
- Arrhythmia
- Bronchitis
- Cholelithiasis
- Cold, common
- Colitis, chronic
- Dyspepsia, chronic
- Gastritis, chronic
- Epilepsy
- Fat digestion, poor
- Fever (with chills)
- Flu/Influenza
- Frozen shoulder
- Gallbladder stones
- Gastroduodenal ulcer
- Headaches, tension
- Hepatitis, chronic
- Hyperacidity
- Hypoacidity
- Hypochondriac pain
- Hysteria
- Intercostal neuralgia
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Irritability
- Joint pain (nonspecific)
- Joint cracking
- Liver and spleen disharmony
- Myelitis
- Nausea
- Neck, stiff
- Nephritis
- Neurasthenia
- Neurosis
- Nervous exhaustion
- Pancreatitis, chronic
- Peritonitis
- Pleurisy
- Pneumonia
- Psychiatric disorders: passive-aggression, hostile outbursts, boundary issues
- Pulmonary tuberculosis
- Purpura, allergic
- Retching
- Rhinitis, allergic
- Sleep disorders
- Thirst, lack of
- Trigeminal neuralgia
- Ulcers: gastric, duodenal, peptic
- Urination, inhibited
- Urticaria, intractable
- Vomiting

**Synergy of Ingredients**
Three of the five ingredients of Cinnamon Twig Formula (Gui Zhi Tang) are also part of the Minor Bupleurum (Xiao Chai Hu Tang) formulation. In order to create Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) one need only add two of the ingredients from Cinnamon Twig Formula (Gui Zhi Tang) to Minor Bupleurum Formula (Xiao Chai Hu Tang). These two ingredients are cinnamon twig (gui zhi) and white peony root (bai shao). This important combination is the primary means by which Chinese herbal medicine harmonizes the ying and wei. Cinnamon twig (gui zhi) enters into the ying level of the vessels, strengthens the qi in the vessel walls, and expels evil qi outward. It invigorates the circulation of the yang qi in general and helps to regulate pores and sweating. The wei qi circulates in the muscle and interstitial layers, and as cinnamon twig (gui zhi) assists the wei qi to warm the muscles, it can help to alleviate some of the stiffness associated with taiyang wind-strike patterns. While cinnamon twig (gui zhi) has an expansive, invigorating action, white peony root (bai shao) contracts, and in so doing, secures the ying and strengthens the vessels. It secures the blood while squeezing out the thinner, lighter pathogenic influence into the interstices where it can be released outward by the action of the cinnamon twig (gui zhi). Together, these actions work in harmony to strengthen the ying, invigorate the wei, and expel pathogens from the muscle layer and skin.

The chief herb in Minor Bupleurum Formula (Xiao Chai Hu Tang) is bupleurum, (chai hu). Slightly bitter and neutral to slightly cool, bupleurum has a light, lifting, clearing, and mobilizing nature. As the chief herb in this formula it resolves the shaoyang level. Its releasing property frees the liver-shaoyang complex from bind and restores its regulating function. The ascending property of bupleurum (chai hu)
lifts the pathogen toward the exterior where the cinnamon twig (gui zhi) and white peony root (bai shao) can work on expelling it altogether.

Scutellaria (huang qin) is cold and bitter. It can clear heat from the chest in general, and the lung and gallbladder in particular. It is efficient at clearing shaoyang heat, fullness in the chest and abdomen, and eliminating unrest or irritability. When combined with bupleurum (chai hu) in the present proportions, it does not drain downward, but assists the bupleurum in releasing the shaoyang by eliminating the heat that is bound there. When heat and stagnation are resolved, the pivot mechanism that lies between the interior and the exterior can return to normal.

Prepared pinellia (zhi ban xia) warms and transforms turbidity and phlegm in the middle burner and lung. When combined with fresh ginger (sheng jiang), the two harmonize the middle warmer to stop nausea and retching and restore appetite. When combined with cinnamon twig (gui zhi), fresh ginger (sheng jiang) helps to release the exterior and disperse cold. The combination is effective for treating the joint and body aches associated with this pattern. When fresh ginger (sheng jiang) is combined with jujube date (da zao) it performs the same harmonizing function as the combination of cinnamon twig (gui zhi) and white peony root (bai shao) for ying and wei. This same combination also protects the stomach qi and supplements the spleen qi.

Codonopsis (dang shen), licorice root (gan cao) and jujube date (da zao) combine to support the normal qi and thereby prevent the pathogenic influence from penetrating into the interior. They fortify a weakened Earth so that excess in Wood cannot harm it.

Licorice root (gan cao) and jujube date (da zao) moderate the drying action of acrid substances of the formula and harmonize the formula to encourage the body to accept it as a single entity.

**Formula Discussion**

The *Shang Han Lun* states that “the shaoyang is the pivot,” and that it “lies between interior and exterior.” The implications of the “pivot” designation have been explored in great detail over the centuries. To begin with, the muscle groups through which the hand and foot shaoyang channels course, are located on the sides of the body. They help to turn (pivot) the head, the neck and the hands; they also pivot the legs by moving the hips, and the feet by moving the ankles. The beginning of the gallbladder channel is at the outer canthus of the eye, where it is positioned for turning our attention toward or away from present events. Similarly, the triple warmer channel ends in front of the ear, where it is positioned for tuning into (if we so choose) sounds in our environment.

In both instances this location is at the “pivot” of experience, where we can choose to turn toward the object/event or away from it. A 12th Century commentator on the *Shang Han Lun*, Cheng Wu-Ji, clarified that the shaoyang is not both interior and exterior, but, as it lies between the two, is neither interior nor exterior. It is clear from an examination of the location of the foot and hand shaoyang channels that they are positioned on the body in such a way that they govern acceptance or rejection of experience. When at the location of the shaoyang, an experience is not yet interior, nor is it completely exterior. When an unanticipated event materializes in our immediate surroundings, we choose, consciously or habitually, and depending on our immediate impression, to either turn away from it or toward it. We either turn our backs (taiyang) to the event to keep it exterior, or we face it (yangming) to determine what we will take and what we will leave from the experience. Like walking into a doorway (the “pivot” is sometimes described as a swinging door) and pausing there, shaoyang movements supply the opportunity to make further determinations about a subject’s value to us. This is why the gallbladder is the organ in charge of decision-making and why Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) can be used to treat social boundary issues. When functioning properly, the shaoyang channels, coursing through our sinews and the sides of the head, rule over the choice of experience as we journey through our day.
Bupleurum & Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) treats a combination of taiyang and shaoyang patterns, these are the two pivots, the diaphragm and the neck, that are commonly involved in the dual or transmuted pattern under discussion. Stiff neck is common, but a glomus at the level of the diaphragm is even more common. The waist usually does not stiffen from invasion of pathogenic qi, but the bladder, being an organ of the taiyang, can easily be affected. Inhibited urination is a common sign of taiyang stage patterns; it also occurs in shaoyang patterns when the lower pivot is blocked, causing an interference with the coursing and discharging of the water pathway.

The coursing and regulating actions of the shaoyang are manifold in the body, and all of them involve a pivot mechanism somewhere in each process. The addition of cinnamon twig (gui zhi) and white peony root (bai shao) to the base formula adds taiyang signs and symptoms to the already diverse and numerous indications. At first this can seem daunting to the practitioner who is seeking the right formula for his or her patient, but this transmuted pattern has a narrower group of indications than the total sum from both the shaoyang and the taiyang patterns. The proper application of Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) becomes quite clear when one quits trying to decipher its usefulness from among the many indications and instead seeks confirmation by matching at least one of the primary signs and symptoms from each of the taiyang and shaoyang patterns.

Modern Applications
For hundreds of formative years, the Shang Han Lun was the only Chinese herbal text to which Japanese practitioners had access. As a result, they explored the range of applications of these formulas to a far greater extent than the Chinese themselves, who kept on producing new schools of thought and new formularies. Many of the modern applications of Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) have been well established in Japan. Studies exist to support many of these, but where the application has been in place for centuries, we defer to “common usage” for support. The authors do not recommend using Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) for any of the afflictions below in the absence of corroborating taiyang-shaoyang primary signs/symptoms. (See list on front page.)

Chronic Hepatitis B & C, Liver and Gallbladder Conditions
Cholelithiasis and chronic hepatitis are two of the disorders commonly treated with Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang).iii Commonly Used Chinese Formulas Vol. 1, cites a trial involving 113 cases of chronic hepatitis, using Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) to achieve a total amelioration rate of 62.3% of the cases involved in the study.iv There is an ongoing debate as to the safety of
combining a **Minor Bupleurum Formula (Xiao Chai Hu Tang)** -based formula such as **Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)** with interferon treatments. In 1989, the first case reported of interstitial pneumonia attributed to **Minor Bupleurum Formula (Xiao Chai Hu Tang)** while used in conjunction with interferon treatments was published in a Japanese study. The relatively low number of 13 cases of interstitial pneumonia associated with the combined use of **Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)** and interferon treatments were reported between 1989 to 1993. The correlation between treating chronic hepatitis patients undergoing interferon treatments with a bupleurum-based formula and the occurrence of interstitial pneumonia is in question because interstitial pneumonia is a side effect of interferon treatment given alone with no herbal component. There is some evidence that interstitial pneumonia can occur as a result of the administration of bupleurum-based herbal treatments alone. The herb that was suspected of causing the tendency to develop interstitial pneumonia is scutellaria (*huang qin*).vi

**Stomach Ulcers and Gastrointestinal Conditions**

Modern Japanese herbal applications (Kampo) for abdominal and gastrointestinal disorders include gastric and duodenal ulcers, hyperacidity, hypoacidity, and chronic appendicitis. Such modern disorders as irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease have also been successfully treated with this formula.viii A study conducted on rats showed that **Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)** has an anti-ulcerative effect. It has been shown to suppress the secretion of gastric acid, pepsin and gastrin.ix

**Chronic Pancreatitis**

A clinical study in China found that this formula, when administered as an 8-week trial to a group of 21 patients with chronic pancreatitis, achieved an overall effectiveness rate of 71%.x

**Epileptic Seizures**

**Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)** has been shown to reduce or eliminate epileptic seizures in at least one Kampo clinical study.xi This study cited 24 patients who had epileptic seizures that were uncontrolled by Western medicine. They were given, in addition to their anti-convulsive drugs, **Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)**. Though there was a wide range of epileptic symptoms among the participants, from 5 seizures monthly to 3-5 per day, the study showed an all around effectiveness rate of 79%. This therapy appeared to be most effective for tonic-clonic type seizures.

**Emotional and Psychological Conditions**

A number of psychiatric disorders such as passive aggression, hostile outbursts, boundary issues, neurosis, hysteria, and nervous exhaustion may be effectively treated with **Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)**. The ability of this formula to harmonize the interior with the exterior, the *ying* (construction) with the *wei* (defense), makes this the “Great Harmonizer” on an emotional level as well. If the individual feels an imbalance between external circumstance and their internal nature, accompanied by a sense of feeling overwhelmed, a fear of being out of control, or describes feeling possessed, these may be indications of the need to harmonize the interior with the exterior. Many suggest the use of a spirit dosage, rather than the full dosage. Spirit dosages are typically smaller than the full dosage, the idea being that the lighter dose has the opportunity to become more refined during metabolization. The more refined substances have a greater affinity for the spirit, which is the most refined substance of life. An example of a spirit dose would be ½ to 1 tablet, 2 times daily.

**Formula Comparisons**

**Minor Bupleurum (Xiao Chai Hu Tang) and Bupleurum and Cinnamon (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)**

**Minor Bupleurum Formula (Xiao Chai Hu Tang)** is more commonly used in Kampo treatments for Hepatitis C than **Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)**. There are two reasons for this. One is that there is typically more heat involved in Hepatitis C than would be appropriate for **Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)**. The other is that Hepatitis C does not typically present with *taiyang* signs/symptoms, unless the patient has recently contracted an external cold pathogen. There is a
significant body of research on the use of Minor Bupleurum Formula (Xiao Chai Hu Tang) for treating Hepatitis C.

Cinnamon D Formula (Gui Zhi Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang) and Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)

These formulas treat many psychological and emotional disorders. Conditions such as anxiety, dream disturbed sleep, irritability, mental confusion, nervousness, neurosis, sexual dysfunction resulting from abuse, and shen instability can benefit from these formulas. Choose Cinnamon D Formula instead of Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) if the pattern shows heart and kidney disharmony; use Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) with accompanying signs such as moist skin/spontaneous sweating or fullness in the chest and epigastrum.

Duhuo and Loranthus Formula (Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang) and Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)

Duhuo and Loranthus Formula expels wind dampness from the joints, particularly in the lower body. If the joint pain includes a crackling sensation in the joints and/or hypochondriac pain, or sciatic pain, especially if there are taiyang-shaoyang combination of symptoms, Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula is more appropriate. Use Duhuo and Loranthus Formula (Du Huo Ji Sheng Tang) when the underlying condition is kidney deficiency with blood stasis.

Earth-Harmonizing Formula (He Tu Pian) and Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang)

Earth-Harmonizing Formula (He Tu Pian) is preferred for liver and spleen/stomach disharmony over Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) if symptoms of internal excess such as food stagnation or liver qi constraint with stomach heat are present. Earth Harmonizing Formula includes Si Jun Zi Tang, which supplements the middle warmer and harmonizes the stomach. The emphasis is on harmonizing the interior. Other ingredients relieve qi constraint and reduce food stagnation. Abdominal symptoms may be similar to the presentation appropriate for Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) but other signs/symptoms from taiyang/shaoyang will not be present. The pulse indicating appropriate use for Earth Harmonizing Formula (He Tu Pian) will indicate spleen qi deficiency and liver excess. Likewise, there will be evidence of food stagnation. Whereas in the Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang) pattern, there is merely a lack of appetite and/or thirst.
**Useful Combinations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Formula to Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For Hepatitis C</td>
<td>Use with Liver C Formula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-acute Hepatitis A, when there is low-grade fever and body aches, without jaundice</td>
<td>Use with Poria 5 Formula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomach or duodenal ulcers from <em>H. pylori</em></td>
<td>Use with Oregano Oil Formula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallstones with pain and spasms</td>
<td>Use with Corydalis Formula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthritic pain, acute flare up, with Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula constitution</td>
<td>Use with Chase Wind Penetrate Bone Formula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronchitis, chronic with little or no heat signs</td>
<td>Use with Pinellia and Magnolia Bark Formula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acid reflux, chronic</td>
<td>Use with Pinellia and Magnolia Bark Formula.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Endnotes**

1. Unless one is expert, the pulse is not usually a reliable source of confirmation for this pattern because the fine, string-like pulse of a Minor Bupleurum Formula (*Xiao Chai Hu Tang*) pattern and the weak floating pulse typical of a Cinnamon Twig Formula (*Gui Zhi Tang*) pattern can combine in a number of ways. However, the pulse can be useful in contraindicating a prescription of Bupleurum and Cinnamon Formula (*Chai Hu Gui Zhi Tang*). If the pulse is deep and weak, or thready and deep, a different formula should be administered. Likewise, if the tongue body is bright red or pale and flaccid, or if the coat is white and greasy, this formula should not be considered.


**References**


