

CASE REPORT

Effect of Herbs on Postoperative Intestinal Obstruction: A Case Report

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ABSTRACT

Postoperative intestinal obstruction is one of the most common and challenging complications after patients receive pelvic or abdominal surgery. The effectiveness of conventional therapies is varied and they are associated with a high recurrence rate. Traditional Chinese Medicine can be beneficial in the treatment of intestinal obstruction. In this case, a 65-year-old woman had progressively increasing abdominal pain, distension, and constipation following total hip replacement surgery. The patient was diagnosed with partial intestinal obstruction and was treated for 6 days without success using conventional Western medicine, including Enema Glycerini and Sodium Phosphates Rectal Solution. We received a request from the surgical department for a Chinese medicine

consultation. Two doses of modified Dachengqi Decoction herbal formula were prescribed for the patient. The patient had her first flatus and defecation within 2 hours after ingestion of the first dose of herbal medicine and subsequently all of the symptoms were relieved. The patient was soon discharged without any further complications; a 5-year follow-up indicated that the patient had no recurrence of intestinal obstruction. This case is the first to report the effect of a Chinese herbal decoction in achieving remission of intestinal obstruction with only 1 dose. Large scale randomized controlled trials are warranted to confirm our findings. (*Altern Ther Health Med.* 2021;27(5):74-76).

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INTRODUCTION

Postoperative small bowel obstruction, also called postoperative intestinal obstruction (IO), is one of the common complications after patients receive pelvic or abdominal surgery. The surgery can cause postoperative adhesions and hernias. It has been estimated that the incidence of postoperative

IO due to any cause was 9%.¹ Marked by a series of uncomfortable symptoms such as abdominal pain, bloating and constipation, postoperative IO has been found to result in prolonged hospitalization, a reduced quality of life, and even an increased rate of life-threatening complications, which makes the timely diagnosis and treatment vital for patients.¹

Currently, first-line therapies are based on nonoperative methods such as parenteral nutrition, nasogastric decompression, bowel rest, and other symptomatic treatments. However, the efficacy of conventional therapies is varied and sometimes the curative effects can be limited and far from ideal. Consequently, in some severe circumstances, including strangulation, reoperation is performed for IO patients, but the likelihood of recurrence is high (up to 15.9%),² and the postoperative adhesion is also associated with a high recurrent rate of obstruction. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has been used for the management of gastrointestinal disease for thousands of years and various studies have shown that TCM has its own advantages in the treatment of IO. Here we report a case of IO treated with Chinese herbal medicine as an adjunctive therapy, which successfully alleviated the symptoms of postoperative IO. This report was written following the CARE guidelines.³