Mugwort and moxa floss

- Mugwort is the common name for 艾葉 (Folium Artemisiae argyi).
- Mugwort floss (艾絨 ai rong) is also known as mugwort wool, mugwort punk, or loose moxa.

- Mugwort is a common weed. It grows almost everywhere.

What you see here is California mugwort (Artemisia douglasiana)

Chinese mugwort looks a bit different, but the local version makes floss just fine.
This is Artemisia argyi, the preferred source, but A. vulgaris is also used.

The leaves are green on top but have white fur on the bottom.

It has a fragrant odor that is easy to recognize once you know it.

The Best Dates for Harvesting Mugwort

- Traditionally, mugwort was picked on the third day of the third lunar month or the fifth day of the fifth lunar month and then dried in the sun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Third day of third lunar month</th>
<th>Fifth day of fifth lunar month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>April 5</td>
<td>June 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>March 24</td>
<td>June 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>June 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>June 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>June 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mugwort in April in Malibu (around the 3rd day of the 3rd lunar month)

Mugwort in June in Malibu (around the 5th day of the 5th lunar month)
Once mugwort starts to make flowers or seeds, it is too late to pick for floss.

Harvesting mugwort

- Besides being the right time to get the leaves (before the plant starts to flower), this is the time of the year when yang is increasing or near its peak within the universe. So mugwort picked at this time retains more yang qi.

Traditionally mugwort was picked on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month (端午节 Duan Wu Festival) and hung over the door to protect the house from toxic things such as snakes and scorpions.

Making Floss

- Making floss
  - After harvesting the mugwort, strip the leaves off the stalks and dry them in the sun, or hang the stalks upside down while the leaves dry, probably for a couple of weeks.

By the way, California mugwort is sometimes called ‘dream sage.’

- Native Americans used it to promote vivid dreams and sometimes even lucid dreaming. The dreams are usually peaceful.
- If you hang the mugwort to dry in your bedroom, you may be pleasantly surprised!
Once dry, remove the leaves from the stems. You can store the leaves for later.

To make floss, grind the leaves.

- Use a rough mortar and pestle.
- A Mexican molcajete works very well.
- It helps to pick out the stems and large veins before grinding.

In the first grinding, the leaves are broken up. Pick out any stems.

Use a sieve.

- Put the floss in a sieve. Rub it against the sides.
- Discard the powder that comes out the bottom.
- Pick out any sticks or foreign matter.
Look at the fine fibers at the edge of the leaf. That is what we want. The rest needs to be removed.

Repeatedly grind it and sieve it until it is the quality you want.

This is a dusty job, so you might want to wear a mask if you do a lot.

Still needs more work

You can also use an electric herb grinder to make more faster.
Aging the floss

- Floss should be aged for three years, sometimes placing it in the sun.
- Floss looks green when freshly made.
- It will turn golden or brown as it ages, depending on the quality.

New versus Old

Storage

- Floss should be stored inside a dry container.
- Periodically, perhaps shortly before it is used, you can dry it in the sun or bake it in the oven at a low temperature. This is especially important if you live where there is high humidity.

Note: Why would anyone want to pick mugwort and make floss?

- Not to save money on moxa supplies!
- We are so out of touch with nature (heaven and earth). This is a good excuse to get out of the city and follow a stream.
- This is an activity that doctors have done for thousands of years. It is a way of connecting with our predecessors.
- I live in my head way too much and working with my hands takes me back to my heart.
Here is some homemade floss from California mugwort. You can see sticks and dark spots, so it still needs more work.

Here is a batch of homemade floss, fairly good quality (but still needs more aging).

The lighter color, softer, and cleaner it is, the better the quality.

1 low quality commercial floss
2 high quality commercial floss
3 homemade floss, not yet aged
Quality of Moxa Floss

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good quality floss</th>
<th>Poor quality floss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yellow, pale</td>
<td>Greenish-brown, dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft, fine texture</td>
<td>Coarse texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pieces of twigs</td>
<td>Has impurities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cones hold together</td>
<td>Cannot make small cones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spongy</td>
<td>Not springy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 g of leaves makes 100-150 g of floss</td>
<td>500 g of leaves makes 300-350 g of floss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low quality floss on the left, high quality on the right (both are store-bought)

Note the color and texture differences.
Note the dust underneath the poor quality floss.

Why is high grade floss reserved for direct moxibustion?

- High quality floss holds together as grain-of-rice size cones or smaller. It makes much less smoke and smells pleasant. Its heat is less ‘fierce’ so it will not damage the flesh.
- High grade floss is pure fiber without any leaf matter, twigs, or excessive amounts of volatile oils. This makes its fire more mellow.

High quality floss is used for direct moxibustion.
High Quality Floss

- Ultra Pure Gold floss from Japan (on the left) is considered the best.
- High quality Korean floss (on the right) is almost as good and is a third of the price.

Lower quality floss is still useful. It is used for indirect moxibustion or in moxa sticks.

Lower quality floss as it is more smoky, smell, and 'fierce.'

However, I suggest avoiding the lowest quality floss as it is more smoky, smell, and 'fierce.'

Low quality floss can be improved

- If you buy low quality floss for indirect moxibustion, you can still improve it some by using the sieve. The more dust you get off it, the less smoke and smell it will make.

Modern commercial production of floss

- In modern times machines are used to grind the leaves and sift off the residue.
- We still want to remove all stems and leaf matter (the green parts of the leaf) and retain the fine white fibers from the leaf.
Leaves to floss ratio

- The quality is determined in large part by the ratio of dried leaves to floss obtained from it.
  - A 3/1 ratio means three grams of leaves are processed for every gram of floss obtained.
  - The higher the ratio, the better the quality.
  - Commercial floss may have a 3/1, 5/1, 12/1, or 30/1 ratio.
- Unfortunately, this ratio is not written on the package when you buy floss.

黃金艾絨 gold moxa floss

- Floss with a 30/1 ratio is called gold moxa floss (黃金艾絨).
- High quality mugwort floss like this undergoes several weeks of being ground, cleaned with a sieve, and dried in the sun, perhaps a few dozen times.

Quality of moxa sticks

- Moxa sticks are also judged by the quality of floss inside them. There is ordinary grade, grade A, high grade, ultimate grade, and so forth.
- The ordinary grade is basically 1/1 (one unit of leaves makes one unit of floss – just the broken up mugwort leaf with nothing sifted off). There are twigs and all kinds of coarse materials inside these moxa sticks.

Aging

- Mugwort to be used in herbal formulas has different standards than mugwort floss.
- Ming and Qing dynasty books often wrote: 煎服宜鮮，灸火宜陳。 “Fresh is suitable to be decocted for internal use; aged is suitable for moxibustion fire.”

- Mengzi (Zhou) said: “A disease of seven years needs three-year-old mugwort.”
- Li Shizhen (Ming) said “Moxibustion with fresh mugwort floss damages a person’s flesh and vessels.”

Aging

- Floss needs to be aged for some time so that excessive volatile oil content can evaporate. As it ages, the floss color changes from green to gold (high quality floss) or greenish-brown to brown (low quality floss).
Before we talk about moxibustion...

• … we need to begin making Zi Yun Gao because it takes a long time.
• We are making Zi Yun Gao so we can use it in direct moxibustion.
• I will tell you the details soon, but let’s start cooking it first.

Purple Cloud Ointment

(紫雲膏 Zi Yun Gao,
Shiunko in Japanese)

• An ointment made with
• sesame oil and beeswax

Purple Cloud Ointment

• The original recipe was called Flesh Moistening Ointment (Run Ji Gao), from 陳實功《外科正宗:潤肌膏》 Correct Model of External Medicine by Chen Shigong (Ming dynasty)

紫雲膏 Zi Yun Gao
(Purple Cloud Ointment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 liter</th>
<th>麻油 Sesame oil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 grams</td>
<td>紫草 Zi Cao (Zi Gen) (紅條紫草 or 紫根)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 grams</td>
<td>當歸 Dang Gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 grams</td>
<td>黃蠟 Beeswax</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• If you make this for yourself, you can make a half recipe.

紫雲膏 Zi Yun Gao
(Purple Cloud Ointment)

• Heat the oil and wax to 120°C.
• Simmer the Dang Gui until it floats.
• Remove it with a slotted spoon.
紫雲膏 Zi Yun Gao
(Purple Cloud Ointment)

• Let the heat rise to 142°C.
• When the temperature is 142°C, turn off the heat and add the Zi Cao. The oil will immediately turn quite red.

紫雲膏 Zi Yun Gao
(Purple Cloud Ointment)

• When the Zi Cao stops foaming (maybe 10 minutes), remove the big pieces of Zi Cao and strain it through a cloth.

紫雲膏 Zi Yun Gao
(Purple Cloud Ointment)

• As it cools, stir it to make it the proper texture. If not, it becomes hard like a candle.
• When it is very thick like honey or yogurt, pour it into small containers. Let it cool.

Stirring gives you the proper texture

• Making this type of ointment is like making ice cream – you have to stir it if you want the soft texture. Otherwise the ice cream would freeze into a solid block.

紫雲膏 Zi Yun Gao
(Purple Cloud Ointment)

Functions: moistens the skin, stops itching, engenders flesh, kills fungus, reduces inflammation, stops pain, and helps close open sores.

Uses: burns, bleeding hemorrhoids, dry skin, wrinkles, ulcers, eczema, tinea, calluses, corns, acne, cold sores, frostbite, alopecia, external injuries, itchy bug bites, and various skin problems.

紫雲膏 Zi Yun Gao
(Purple Cloud Ointment)

Functions: For direct moxibustion, it is used to help stick cones on the point, aid in healing, and prevent scars.
What is moxibustion?

- **The narrow definition:** Moxibustion is the medical application of burning mugwort floss on or over an acumoxa point or an affected site.

- **The broader definition:** Moxibustion is an external heat therapy applied on or over an acumoxa point or an affected site.
  - Mugwort or other combustible materials may be used. Mulberry twigs (Sang Zhi, Ramulus Mori), peach twigs (Tao Zhi, Ramulus Persicae), Deng Xin Cao (Medulla Junci), and even incense may be burned as moxibustion.

- Some moxibustion doesn't even use fire. You can use chemically-induced heat to warm the points.
  - **Example:** the external application of a warm-natured medicinal such as garlic. This is called heavenly moxibustion or medicinal application moxibustion.
Advantages of moxibustion

1. Cost-effective and fairly convenient to perform.
2. Variety of application methods and functions.
3. A fully developed system with its own theories, scope of practice, methods for supplementation and draining, contraindications, and a long record of clinical experience.
4. Effectively treats many diseases. Modern research and clinical experience confirm this.

Advantages of moxibustion

5. In some cases, moxibustion is more effective than other modalities:
   - Can be used when the patient is too weak for acupuncture or medicinal formulas cannot be digested.
   - In acute conditions, moxibustion provides quicker results than internally administered formulas.
   - There are also some conditions that respond better to moxibustion than to acupuncture or medicinals.

Disadvantages of moxibustion

1. Time-consuming and requires stocking various substances.
2. Smoke and ash: smoke alarms, odor, messy, etc.
3. Risk of fire and burns. Some malpractice insurance policies do not allow direct moxibustion.
4. Possible the toxicity of the fumes when certain powdered medicinals are burned. Example: 雄黃 Xiong Huang (Realgar).

Functions of Moxibustion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplements the center, boosts post-heaven qi</th>
<th>Moxibustion is yang so it moves qi and blood. This also stops pain.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplements qi, nourishes blood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warms yang, supplements qi and yang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returns yang, stems desorption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubeares yang, lifts the fallen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevents disease, safeguards health, strengthens the body, boosts longevity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Functions of Moxibustion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulates and contains the thoroughfare (chong) and conception (ren) vessels</th>
<th>Commonly used for gynecology because of its functions (moving blood, nourishing blood, dispersing cold, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repositions the fetus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Functions of Moxibustion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nourishes yin</td>
<td>If the right points and techniques are chosen, can be used to descend qi and nourish yin... but these functions are somewhat controversial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downbears counterflow, descends qi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels (or calms) the liver, subdued yang, extinguishes wind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expels evils from the body</td>
<td>Can be used to radiate evils outward, including heat evils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clears heat, resolves toxins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Overview of techniques

#### Mugwort Moxibustion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mugwort cone</th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Non-marking or marking moxibustion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moxibustion</td>
<td>Direct moxibustion</td>
<td>Indirect moxibustion</td>
<td>Using various substances to isolate the cones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mugwort Moxibustion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mugwort stick</th>
<th>Pure</th>
<th>Moxa sticks with other medicinals added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moxibustion</td>
<td>Both have</td>
<td>Suspended moxibustion: techniques such as wandering, sparrow-pecking, circling, gentle moxibustion, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressing moxibustion</td>
<td>Isolating substance moxibustion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Mugwort Moxibustion**

- **Warm-needle Moxibustion**
  - Using moxa floss, slices of moxa roll, moxa caps, etc.

- **Mugwort cake moxibustion**
  - Using ironing, sunlight, hot-water bottles, or heat lamps

- **Mugwort-fuming and steaming moxibustion**
  - Using smoke or steam to treat an area

- **Warming device moxibustion**
  - Using a warming cylinder, moxa box, etc.

- **Liquid moxa, self-heating cones, point plasters, and other modern innovations**

**Non-mugwort Moxibustion**

- **Moxibustion by burning medicinals**
- **Peach or mulberry stick, Deng Xin Cao (Medulla Junci) moxibustion, and other types**
Non-mugwort Moxibustion

Moxibustion without burning medicinals
Heavenly moxibustion (blistering)
Medicinal application moxibustion (non-blistering)

Non-mugwort Moxibustion

Electrical moxibustion
Electrical heat moxibustion
Electrical warm-needle moxibustion

Related External Heat Therapies

| Ironing | Placing medicinals on the body and using a hot iron to press them. |
| Fuming | Burning mugwort or other medicinals and holding the affected part in the smoke. |
| Steaming | Medicinals, often mugwort, are boiled in a liquid. The affected region is held in the steam. |
| Washes, soaks, or baths | All of these methods begin with a decoction. |
| Roasting | Medicinals are applied to a site, then heated near a heat source. |

Clinical overview

- The treatment room should have good ventilation but not be drafty or cold.
- Have the equipment ready: moxa supplies, lighter, ash tray; but also fire extinguisher, first aid kit, etc.
- Position the patient comfortably.

Clinical overview

- How will you put out the fire? Be prepared.
- Be ready to remove the moxa from patient. Don’t leave patient alone. Do you need tweezers, moxa scoop, etc.?
- Moxa ash can cause burns and is messy if not properly managed.
- Avoid burns on the patient, yourself, counters, and treatment tables.

Apply Moxibustion to Yang First and Yin Second

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yang First</th>
<th>Yin Second</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper body</td>
<td>Lower Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head and trunk</td>
<td>Limbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang channels</td>
<td>Yin channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back</td>
<td>Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left side</td>
<td>Right Side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First less</td>
<td>Later more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dosage

- Moxibustion must be strong enough to be effective. Moxibustion is generally given in weaker doses in the west than in China: it is given less frequently and with less intensity.
- A treatment with moxibustion uses fewer points than an acupuncture treatment. It is better to give adequate treatment to a few points than to give inadequate treatment to many points.

Dosage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dosage is Determined By</th>
<th>Appropriate Dosage is based on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of cones</td>
<td>Condition of the patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of the cones</td>
<td>Constitution of the patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration (course) of treatment</td>
<td>Age of the patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of treatment</td>
<td>Site or point to be treated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophy of the doctor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dosage

- Moxibustion for 养生 nourishing life usually uses a lower dose per session with frequent sessions over a long period of time.
- Moxibustion to treat disease usually uses a higher dose per session and treatment should be ceased as soon as the patient recovers.
- More moxibustion is given in the autumn and winter than in the spring and summer: as yang increases in the universe, less yang is needed in treatment.

Dosage

- Standard dose
- Strong patient or serious disease

Half the dose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Exceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head, face</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>More on Bai Hui (Du 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ama</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest, upper abdomen</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Less on Ju Que (Ren 14) and Ju Wei (Ren 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper back</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Less on Xin Shu (UB 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bony areas</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>More on Gao Huang (UB 43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleshy areas</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legs</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>More on Zu San Li (ST 36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower abdomen</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>More on Shen Que (Ren 8), Qi Hai (Ren 6), and Guan Yuan (Ren 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low back</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Less on Ming Men (Du 4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dosage

- More on Ming Men (Du 4)
- Low on Xin Shu (UB 15)
- More on Gao Huang (UB 43)
- More on Zu San Li (ST 36)
- More on Shen Que (Ren 8), Qi Hai (Ren 6), and Guan Yuan (Ren 4)
- Less on Ming Men (Du 4)

Number of Cones

- Generally, when cones are used, the ancient books would specify an odd (yang) number if the count was less than 10, such as 1, 3, 5, or 7 cones.

Number of Cones

- The effect of moxibustion treatment is cumulative, so treatment may be spread out into sessions.
- If a low number of cones is suggested, such as 3, 5, or 7 cones, this probably means to give this treatment every day until the patient is better.
- When a formula says 100 or 300 cones, do it all in one day or spread it out over a few consecutive days.
Moxa Sensation

• Like needling sensation or de qi (得氣) with acupuncture, there is also “moxa sensation.”

After Treatment

• Wipe ash, moxa tar, and/or ointment off the point.
• Moxa tar sometimes appears as a yellowish-brown oily film around the point. Since studies show moxa tar has beneficial qualities, don’t be in a hurry to clean it off.
• Do not use alcohol as this is cold and will counteract the treatment.
• If you want to clean it further, use warm water.

Moxa Sores

• According to past masters, moxa sores are necessary for effective treatment. This is when moxibustion causes a blister followed by a sore.
• Since a moxa sore takes a while to heal, one treatment gives continuous stimulation for an extended period of time.
• Compared to a patient that gets a weekly treatment which only results in redness and warmth, there is obviously a big difference in the dosage.

After Treatment

• You may choose to apply an ointment afterwards.
• Keep the area that received treatment covered up so the mugwort qi and warmth do not escape.

Self-care after moxibustion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediately rest for a while without eating or drinking (besides water)</td>
<td>Engage in sex for 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat a simple bland diet for some days</td>
<td>Get stressed or upset for 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This table assumes a high dose of moxibustion.</td>
<td>Participate in sports or intense activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat cold or damp foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overeat or get too hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allow exposure to wind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moxa Sores
Moxa Sores

- 楊繼洲 『針灸大成』 Zhen Jiu Da Cheng (Ming): "If the moxa sore-opening closes easily, the disease qi is unable to exit."
- For repletion evils, moxa sores create an opening through which the evil qi can be expelled. This is like opening the pores to expel wind evils from the exterior. Sweating affects the most superficial layers, but moxa sores open into the channel system. So this method can expel evils from deeper in the body.
- Moxibustion is also used on an affected site such as an abscess. In that case, it directly lets the evil qi exit.

Practical considerations when making moxa sores

- Proper written informed consent.
- Be sure your malpractice insurance covers it.
- Others could incorrectly attribute moxa sores to abuse, so educate the family.

Do not make moxa sores on

- people with compromised immune systems
- diabetics
- people who cannot keep the region clean
- people who form keloid scars
- the face or areas that would disfigure the patient
- the soles of the feet: walking would be painful.

Practical considerations when making moxa sores

- If you are new to this, first practice on yourself.
  - Try Zu San Li (ST 36), Qi Hai (Ren 6), or Guan Yuan (Ren 4).
  - This builds technical skills
  - This helps you understand what the patient experiences.
  - You receive immediate feedback, helping refine your technique.
- Moxa sores often show up some hours after treatment. If you try to make them appear during treatment, you will over-do it.
- Use more small cones, not few large cones. The clinical results will be the same but the patient will suffer less.

Practical considerations when making moxa sores

- You can give one treatment using many small cones, or use a somewhat milder treatment for 2-3 days in a row. The latter will be less painful for the patient but can still make moxa sores.
- With moxa sores, the dosage is already fairly high so use only 1-2 points (bilaterally). This is a potent treatment and will not need repeating more than approximately once per month (you could use acupuncture or herbs in between). Once a blister has formed, no more moxibustion is needed until the site has healed.

Practical considerations when making moxa sores

- Gradually increase the intensity of treatment to help the patient tolerate it more easily. Burn the first cone half way and the second cone two-thirds of the way down. Then the third cone can burn all the way down with less discomfort (if it is not too big). This is based on "first use less and later use more moxibustion."
- Generally, blisters do not need bandaging unless they are in an area that will easily get dirty or will be rubbed by clothing.
Practical considerations when making moxa sores

- Inform the patient about proper after-care. Perhaps give written instructions. The patient must keep the area clean and should not break the blisters. Leave them to heal naturally unless they are extremely large. If large, you can open them with a sterile needle. Then apply antiseptic and bandage them.
- Follow up on the patient to be sure that infection does not develop. If the sore begins to look infected (more redness, swelling, and pus), apply an antibiotic ointment and bandage it.

Moxibustion & safety

1. Burns - Unintentional burns should never happen.
   - Be especially careful or avoid moxibustion on:
     - People who cannot report what they feel: comas, dementia, or otherwise impaired consciousness, small children, people with reduced sensitivity (numbness or neuropathy).
     - People with immune disorders that make the healing of sores difficult: immunosuppressant drugs, advanced HIV disease.
     - People with certain bleeding disorders (occasionally a burn or sore may bleed).

Burns

- Do not use moxibustion on the extremities of patients with diabetes as they may have less sensation due to neuropathy and also have a harder time recovering from infections.
- Be sure the patient knows to report their sensations during treatment. Frequently glance at the patient’s face or notice if their body is tense.
- Often touch and look at the skin around the site to monitor skin temperature.
- Remember, blisters often do not show up for some hours after treatment.

Moxibustion & safety

2. Smoke: Inhaling any kind of smoke, including moxa smoke, is harmful.
   - Moxa rolls containing other medicinals such as Xiong Huang (Realgar) are especially harmful. Xiong Huang contains arsenic sulphide. Other medicinals may also be unsafe.
   - Have adequate ventilation. Maybe use an air purifier or a smoke-eater.

Moxibustion & safety

3. Preventing fire
   - Always have a fire extinguisher nearby.
   - Smoke alarms should never be disconnected.
   - Do not leave a patient who is receiving moxibustion unattended.
Moxibustion & safety

• Have on hand the proper equipment for extinguishing the moxa. Always have a plan for extinguishing the moxa before it is lit.
• Make sure all materials are completely extinguished before you leave the room.

Side effects of an unbalanced or improper treatment and other prohibitions

• Some patients are thirsty after receiving moxibustion. Let them drink.
• If the patient has heat (dry mouth, thirst, feels feverish, dark urine, constipation, etc.) after moxibustion, give them a decoction to engender fluids (see below).
• Next time, use less moxibustion, focus more on the lower body, and make sure there is enough time between treatments.

Formula to engender fluids after excessive moxibustion

Decoct 15 grams each of:
- 生地黄 Sheng Di Huang (uncooked Radix Rehmanniae)
- 麦门冬 Mai Men Dong (Tuber Ophiopogonis)
- 玄参 Xuan Shen (Radix Scrophulariae)
- 肉蓯蓉 Rou Cong Rong (Herba Cistanches)

Side effects of an unbalanced or improper treatment and other prohibitions

• If the patient is fearful or the treatment strong, explain the procedure and obtain consent. If the patient is overly frightened, moxibustion may not be the best modality.
• If the patient is extremely weak, acupuncture is forbidden but moxibustion may be applied to the dan tian region or Zu San Li (ST 36).
• A woman with profuse menstrual bleeding should not be given moxibustion except to stop bleeding.
• Be extremely careful when using moxibustion on pregnant women.
Side effects of an unbalanced or improper treatment and other prohibitions

Fainting can be caused by an excessive fear or a treatment that is too strong.

- Other causes include extreme hunger or weakness.
- If the patient is weak, the cones should be small.
- Do not use too many points: 2-5 bilaterally is usually enough.
- Symptoms of fainting include dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, pale face, thin pulse, cold hands, low blood pressure, difficulty speaking, palpitations, sweating, and impaired consciousness.

Side effects of an unbalanced or improper treatment and other prohibitions

Fainting

- If a patient starts to faint, the procedures are the same as for fainting during acupuncture.
- Stop the treatment immediately. Make sure the patient does not fall. Help him or her lie down and elevate the feet, placing the head in a lower position.
- You can apply pressure to Ren Zhong (Du 26) if the patient does not revive immediately.
- When the patient comes to, he or she can sip warm tea.
- If fainting is due to weakness or hunger, apply gentle moxibustion to Zu San Li (ST36), but do not do this if the cause was fear or an overly strong treatment.

Moxibustion & safety

5. Legal liability

- Check your malpractice insurance.
- Make sure your consent form covers your use of moxibustion.

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My Books and Facebook Page

| Moxibustion: the Power of Mugwort Fire | Blue Poppy Press | History, translation of Ming writings on moxibustion |
| Moxibustion: A Modern Clinical Handbook | Blue Poppy Press | Practical guide to using moxibustion |
| Moxibustion: the Power of Mugwort Fire | Facebook Group | My Facebook group with lots of photos and information on moxibustion |
| Zhen Jiu Da Cheng, Volumes 5 and 9 | Chinese Medicine Database | Translation, Volume 9 coming in 2011 |

Suppliers

| Blue Poppy | http://bluepoppy.com/ | My books, moxa supplies, burn ointment |
| KM Supplies | http://www.kmsupplies.com/ | Korean moxa supplies |
| K.S. Choi | http://www.gacuczone.com/ | Korean moxa supplies |
| Lhasa-OMS | http://lhasaoms.com/ | Moxa supplies, generally more expensive |
| CAI | http://www.caicorporation.com/ | Moxa supplies |
Suppliers

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<td>Kenshin</td>
<td><a href="http://kenshin.com/">http://kenshin.com/</a> Japanese style; Shunoko (Zi Yun Gao), moxa supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hiromi Paper</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hiromipaper.com">http://www.hiromipaper.com</a> Mulberry paper for making moxa sticks</td>
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Good Works

| Moxafrica          | Moxafrica is a charitable organization set up to investigate the use of moxibustion for the treatment of tuberculosis, especially in Africa. |

http://www.moxafrica.org/