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### Acupuncture for Healthy Skin

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be very effective at treating skin conditions. Treatments can provide quick relief for acute symptoms and can provide significant and lasting relief from recurrent or chronic skin conditions.

The skin reflects and reacts to imbalances within the body's internal landscape and the effects of the environment. Internal disharmonies caused by strong emotions, diet, and your constitution as well as environmental influences, such as wind, dryness, dampness, and heat can all contribute to the development of a skin disorder. To keep your skin healthy and beautiful on the outside, you must work on the inside of your body as well. Increasing the flow of energy, blood and lymph circulation improves the skin's natural healthy color.

Promotion of collagen production increases muscle tone and elasticity helping to firm the skin. Stimulating the formation of body fluids nourishes the skin and encourages it to be moister, softer, smoother and more lustrous.

General skin conditions that can be treated with acupuncture and Oriental medicine include acne, dermatitis, eczema, pruritus, psoriasis, rosacea, shingles and urticaria (hives). Oriental medicine does not recognize skin problems as one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques with acupuncture such as herbal medicine, bodywork, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 10 patients are treated with Oriental medicine for eczema, each patient will receive a unique, customized treatment with different lifestyle and dietary recommendations.

**If you suffer from a skin condition or would like to know how to optimize your skin health, please call to find out more about how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you**

### Foods to Help You Look Your Best

Acupuncture views nutrition in a complex light, through the application of Oriental medicine wisdom to dietary habits. In short, certain foods are considered too yang, or hot to eat in excess during the warmer months, while others are prized for their yin ability to cool the body. Overall, the goal is balance between the internal yin and yang of the body.

A healthy, nutritional diet, getting good quality sleep and moderate exercise can keep your skin and physical form at it's best. Be sure to integrate these items into your diet to help keep you looking your best!

**Carrots and Sweet Potatoes** - Healthy skin is directly dependent on the amount of vitamin A in our diet. Vitamin A acts as an antioxidant to neutralize harmful elements in our skin, helps to prevent wrinkles, resist infection and maintain the skin's elasticity. One of the best places to get Vitamin A is vegetables that are deep orange in color.



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### Treating Hives with Acupuncture

Hives (urticaria) are swollen, red, bumps, patches or welts on the skin that appear suddenly. Itching is the most common symptom associated with hives, although some people report that hives cause a stinging or burning sensation. Hives can occur anywhere on the body including the hands, face, lips, tongue, throat, or ears.

A sign that the whole body is experiencing a hypersensitivity reaction a hives outbreak can occur due to a wide array of stimuli. While intolerance to certain foods, additives, intense emotions, sunlight exposure, and medications can all cause hives, in 70-75% of outbreaks the exact cause of hives remains unknown.

Whether lasting for just a few minutes, a few hours or persisting for several weeks hives are rarely a medical emergency however, in some cases they can be accompanied by shock, difficulty breathing and be life threatening. About 20% of people will experience hives (urticaria) at some point in their lives. While standard treatment for hives is directed toward relieving unpleasant



**Blackberries, Blueberries, Strawberries, and Plums** - In a study recently published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, these four fruits weighed in with the highest "total antioxidant capacity" of any food. Antioxidants and other phytochemicals in these fruits can protect cells from damage and disintegration, thus guarding against premature aging.

**Salmon, Walnuts, Olive Oil, and Flax Seed** - Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are responsible for skin repair, moisture content, and overall flexibility, but because the body cannot produce its own EFAs, they must be obtained through the diet. Fish, walnuts, and flax seed oil are among the best sources for omega 3 fatty acid. Eating good-quality olive oil helps keep skin lubricated and keeps it looking and feeling healthier overall. Which olive oil is the best for your skin? Those labeled "cold pressed", "expeller processed", or "extra virgin" are the least processed forms. As a result, they contain the highest levels of antioxidative substances.

**Whole Wheat Bread, Brown Rice, Turkey, Tuna and Brazil Nuts** - Selenium is an antioxidant mineral responsible for tissue elasticity and healthy skin. It may play an important role in preventing skin cancer, as some recent studies are showing that skin damaged by the sun may suffer fewer consequences if selenium levels are high.

**Green Tea** - Green tea's ability to slow down the development of some signs of aging is attributed to its high levels of *polyphenols*, which have been well-documented for their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Green tea may help prevent or reduce the risk of skin cancer according to a study published recently in the *Archives of Dermatology*, which shows that whether taken orally or applied to the skin, green tea can reduce the risk of damage from ultraviolet light and thus reduce the risk of skin cancer.

**Water** - Hydration plays a key role in keeping skin cells healthy. It is essential to maintaining your skin's elasticity and suppleness. Keeping cells hydrated helps cells move nutrients in and toxins out, which helps keep skin clean and clear.

## Heartburn Medicines Linked to Cancer - Part I

Heartburn is a symptom that 20-30% of all Americans complain about on a regular basis. GERD, or gastroesophageal reflux disease, is most often responsible for the feeling of heartburn, although not all heartburn. GERD is a condition in which stomach acid refluxes from the stomach into the esophagus. This causes a burning pain and pressure in the chest. It is thought that acid reflux is caused by a faulty cardiac valve at the top of the stomach.

If left unchecked, the stomach acid can erode the esophageal lining possibly leading to Barrett's esophagus, a pre-cancerous condition, and also to esophageal cancer. I have a particularly keen and personal interest in these conditions because my father died from cancer of the esophagus. He suffered from heartburn caused by GERD for many years and took antacid and proton pump inhibitor medicines for the condition.

The conventional medical treatment of GERD is the use of proton pump inhibitor (PPI) drugs. These act by inhibiting the proton pumps that secrete stomach acid, or by blocking stomach acid altogether. Drugs such as Nexium, Prilosec, and Prevacid that control production of stomach acid are some of the most popular medications on the market.

But long-term use of these drugs can have unexpected consequences, a new study shows. The study, from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, raises the concern that the PPI drugs may actually increase the likelihood of developing cancer.

The danger seems to lie in the fact that the drugs suppress the GERD symptoms while the disease process continues undetected and unabated. The drugs suppress stomach acid, but don't cure GERD. The incidence of esophageal cancer has risen sixfold over the past 35 years, roughly the same time frame that PPI use has increased. It is the fastest growing cancer in America, outpacing melanoma, breast, and prostate cancers.

I have long been puzzled by the use of antacids and PPI drugs. In fact, it is found that most cases of acid reflux and GERD are caused by a LACK of stomach acid, not too much acid! Why suppress it even further? When there is sufficient stomach acid, the cardiac valve at the top of the stomach shuts tightly, so that no acid refluxes into the esophagus.

symptoms with antihistamines or a corticosteroid drug many people are turning to acupuncture and Oriental medicine to address underlying imbalances that cause this condition and stop recurrent outbreaks once and for all.

Evidence that Acupuncture and herbal medicine have been used for skin disorders, such as hives, can be found in early medical literature dating back to 3 AD. Medicinal plants and stone needles were utilized to relieve and cure discomforts of the external areas of the body.

In Oriental medicine, an outbreak of hives is described as *wind invading the skin and the meridians*, causing itching and swelling. When the eruptions are red it is an indication that *wind* and *heat* are involved. When the eruptions are a pale pink or white, it is likely that the diagnoses will be *wind-cold invading the skin*. How the condition is diagnosed will determine what acupuncture points are used, what herbal medicinals are prescribed and what lifestyle/dietary recommendations are made.

Treatments are directed at addressing both the cause and the symptoms by providing immediate relief from the itching and swelling and addressing the underlying imbalances and triggers that are causing the condition.

In an ideal stomach acid environment, the stomach PH should be between 1 and 2. This is a very acidic state, similar to battery acid! The stomach needs to be that acidic for several reasons. The highly acidic environment digests any foreign invaders like viruses and bacteria that might be present in your food. So, in that sense, your stomach is your first line of immunity.

You need an acidic stomach to be able to begin the digestive process, especially of proteins. And you need an acid environment to digest and absorb important nutrients like calcium and other vitamins and minerals. Not surprisingly, the use of PPIs and antacids is being linked to bone problems like osteoporosis.

In fact, PPI use is tied to a number of other conditions, such as:

- increased risk of gastric polyps (which increases stomach cancer risk)
- may delay the diagnosis of gastric cancer due to suppression of symptoms
- may increase food allergies and sensitivities
- increases the risk of contracting pneumonia (and doubles the risk of recurrent pneumonia in the elderly)
- may increase fracture risk with long-term use in females over 50 (PPIs decrease your ability to digest and absorb calcium and other minerals)

In addition, PPIs can give altered results on many standard lab tests. For example, Prevacid can artificially increase or decrease cholesterol readings, and Aciphex can increase glucose, albumin, cholesterol, and PSA (prostate antigen), among other things.

Finally, long-term use of PPIs can cause deficiencies in calcium, Vitamin B-12, folate, zinc, magnesium and iron. Absorption of these nutrients is either dependent on stomach acid or is just disrupted by the drugs. The mineral malabsorption is clearly tied to bone loss, and many research studies implicate acid reflux drugs in causing osteoporosis. Low magnesium levels affect heart function and there is evidence low magnesium is also associated with Type 2 diabetes, which is now at endemic proportions in the US.

I am not suggesting you discontinue your GERD medicine, if you are already taking it. That decision is between you and your doctor. I am pointing out some of the possible dangers of PPIs and antacids. I am also suggesting that there are alternative treatments for GERD and heartburn that have fewer risks and side effects. In the next newsletter I will detail some of your alternatives, including diet, herbs, acupuncture, lifestyle modifications, and more.

To your continued good health,

David Mortell, L.Ac.

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