



David Mortell Licensed Acupuncturist

Pittsburgh Acupuncture Center
5655 Bryant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412-363-0886

Treating Autoimmune Disease with Acupuncture

Over 50 million Americans suffer from autoimmune disease; an autoimmune disease occurs when the body's immune system attacks healthy tissue. Autoimmune disorders include rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, thyroid disease, Addison's disease, pernicious anemia, celiac disease, multiple sclerosis, myasthenia gravis and Guillain-Barré syndrome. Due to the complexity of treating autoimmune disorders, integrative medicine solutions including acupuncture and Oriental medicine have received much attention as successful therapies in their treatment. Acupuncture is specifically noted for its use in pain relief, regulating the immune system, managing symptoms and improving quality of life.



What Causes Autoimmune Disease?

Under normal conditions, an immune response cannot be triggered against the cells of one's own body. In certain cases, however, immune cells make a mistake and attack the very cells that they are meant to protect. This can lead to a variety of autoimmune diseases. They encompass a broad category of over 100 diseases in which the person's immune system attacks his or her own cells and tissue.

The exact mechanisms causing these changes are not completely understood, but bacteria, viruses, toxins, and some drugs may play a role in triggering an autoimmune process in someone who already has a genetic (inherited) predisposition to develop such a disorder. It is theorized that the inflammation initiated by these agents, toxic or infectious, somehow provokes in the body a "sensitization" (autoimmune reaction) in the involved tissues.

As the disease develops, vague symptoms start to appear, such as joint and muscle pain, general muscle weakness, possible rashes or low-grade fever, trouble concentrating, or weight loss. The following symptoms may also indicate that something is wrong with the immune system: numbness and tingling in hands and feet, dry eyes, hair loss, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, or repeated miscarriages.

How Acupuncture Treats Autoimmune Disorders

According to Oriental medicine, autoimmune disorders occur when there is imbalance within the body. Imbalance can come from an excess or deficiency of Yin and Yang that disrupts the flow of Qi, or vital energy, through the body. Acupuncture is used to help the body restore balance, treating the root of the disorder, while specifically addressing the symptoms that are unique to each individual.

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6 Food Tips for Autoimmune Disorders

A class of plant chemicals -- known as bioflavonoids -- has been found to dramatically reduce inflammation and improve symptoms associated with autoimmune disorders.

Tea: Both green and black tea contain the flavonoids catechins and theaflavins, which are beneficial in autoimmune disease.

Apples: Apples (with the skin on), contain the flavonoid quercetin, which can reduce allergic reactions and decrease inflammation. Quercetin also occurs naturally in other foods, such as berries, red grapes, red onions, capers, and black tea.

Clinical research has shown that acupuncture causes physical responses in nerve cells, the pituitary gland, and parts of the brain. These responses can cause the body to release proteins, hormones, and brain chemicals that control a number of body functions. It is proposed that, by these actions, acupuncture affects blood pressure, body temperature and the immune system.

In addition to acupuncture, your treatment program to manage your autoimmune disorder may involve a combination of therapies including stress reducing exercises, moderate physical activity, herbal medicine, nutritional support and bodywork.

To learn more about how acupuncture can safely and effectively be incorporated into care for people with an autoimmune disorder, please call for a consultation today.

Enhance your Endocrine Health with Acupuncture

The endocrine system is responsible for hormonal functions in the body and produces 30 distinct hormones each of which has a very specific job to do. This system controls your physical growth, mood, hormone output, reproduction, mental functionality, and immune system. When not working properly, you become more susceptible to disease and your ability to fight off infection is weakened. Endocrine glands and their functioning impact every area of your health.

The keystone of acupuncture and Oriental medicine has always been awakening the body's natural intelligence to heal itself and restore balance to the system of energy pathways (called "meridians") in the body. If the meridians within your body have become depleted, you can suffer from tiredness, infertility, weight gain, depression, digestive problems, hair loss, arthritis, and feeling chilled no matter the temperature.

What are the endocrine glands and what do they do?

The major endocrine glands include the adrenals, pancreas, pineal, pituitary, reproductive and thyroid glands.

Adrenals - Adrenal glands regulate the body's response to stress and are made of two parts, each of which secretes a separate set of hormones. The outer part produces corticosteroid hormones that regulate the balance of salt and water, stress response, metabolism, immune function, and sexual development and function. The inner part secretes adrenaline hormones that increase blood pressure and heart rate in response to stress. Over time, chronic elevated stress levels can lead to weight gain, decreased resistance to infections, fatigue, muscle aches and low blood sugar.

Pancreas - The pancreas produces insulin and glucagon--two hormones that work together to provide the body's cells with a constant supply of energy in the form of glucose.

Pineal - The pineal gland is also known as the *epiphysis cerebri*, *epiphysis* or the "third eye." It produces the serotonin derivative melatonin, a hormone that affects the modulation of wake/sleep patterns and seasonal functions.

Hypothalamus and Pituitary - A collection of specialized cells that provide the primary link between the endocrine and central nervous systems. Nerve cells and hormones signal the pituitary gland to secrete or suppress the release of various hormone messages to the other glands. The pituitary gland is also responsible for secreting growth hormones.

Carrots: Carotenoids are a family of plant pigments that include beta-carotene. A lack of carotenoids in the diet is thought to promote inflammation. Good sources of carotenoids include apricots, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, spinach, kale, butternut squash, and collard greens.

Ginger: Recent studies show that ginger reduces inflammation by inhibiting prostaglandin and suppresses the immune system's production of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines, reducing disease severity in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Omega-3: Omega-3 essential fatty acids can counter the formation of chemicals that cause inflammation. Good natural sources include flaxseed oil and salmon.

Fiber: A healthy and active colon can decrease food sensitivity, which, in turn, can lighten the burden on your immune system.

Cultivate Optimal Endocrine Health

The endocrine system regulates the body through hormonal secretions. Cultivating your endocrine health, combined with proper nutrition and diet, can boost energy, improve appetite, reduce insomnia, relieve depression symptoms, improve circulation, relieve muscle aches and assist in recovering from endocrine disorders. An easy way to look after your endocrine system health is to eat nutritious meals and a well balanced diet.

Reproductive - These glands secrete hormones that control the development of male and female characteristics. In males these glands secrete androgen hormones, most importantly, testosterone. In females they produce estrogen, progesterone, eggs and are involved in reproductive functions.

Thyroid - Thyroid hormones control the growth, temperature and function of every cell in the body. The gland acts as the metabolic engine of the body - if it secretes too little hormone, the body slows and dies; if it secretes too much, the body burns out and dies.

When treating a suspected endocrine condition with acupuncture and Oriental medicine, the practitioner seeks the root cause of the patient's imbalance. The endocrine system is closely tied to the internal balance of the Yin energy and the Yang energy. Imagine that the Yang energy is like gasoline that fuels a car, and Yin energy is the engine coolant. Without the coolant, the engine overheats and burns out. Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine work to make sure the Yin and Yang are equal within the body to restore balance. The root of the body's energy in Oriental medicine is the Kidney meridian so strengthening that meridian also restores nourishment to your endocrine glands. Acupuncture can be used to restore hormonal balance, regulate energy levels, smooth emotions and help manage sleep and menstrual problems.

Many patients benefit from an integrated Eastern and Western medical approach to endocrine health. The strong point of Western medicine is intervention in life-threatening illness, whereas the strong point of Eastern medicine is increased quality of life. Therefore, it is optimal to have both Eastern and Western medicine options available for the most comprehensive care.

A healthy endocrine system that continues to secrete adequate amounts of hormones will slow the aging process and keep you vibrant and healthy as you age.

Come in for a consultation to see how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can assist you with your endocrine health and help you to live a long, healthy life.

My dear clients,

After being in private practice as an acupuncturist and herbalist for 24 years, I have decided to take a six month sabbatical. The purpose of this leave of absence is rest and relaxation. It is time for me to drink deeply from the well of renewal.

My last day of work will be Thursday, September 26, 2013. I will return to my practice on April 1, 2014. I'm happy to tell you that I have found another acupuncturist, Debbie Hardin, to serve your needs while I'm away. Debbie will begin seeing clients in my current office at the Nuin Center starting on Monday September 30, 2013. She will begin the process of meeting clients and shadowing me during the week of August 19.

I feel very relieved and assured that Debbie will be here while I'm away. I trust she will take good care of you while I'm gone. She's a lovely person and a very competent acupuncturist, who is passionate about Chinese medicine. For more information about Debbie, please go to her website at www.hardinacupuncture.com.

Also, Debbie and I will be hosting an open house at my office on Friday September 20, 2013 from 3-6 p.m. Please come to meet Debbie, and to say bon voyage or buen viaje to me. There will be good food and beverages and good company! I will send a reminder notice for the open house at a later date.

A few basic steps you can take to improve your endocrine health are:

Eat Slowly: Don't rush through your meals. Allowing your body to properly digest food reduces after-meal fatigue, boosts your immune system, and enables your endocrine system to properly process nutritional intake.

Exercise: Regular exercise boosts the immune system, improves cardiovascular health, muscle mass, and prevents bone loss. Stress-reducing exercises such as yoga, Qigong, or Tai Chi can also be beneficial.

Manage Your Stress: An important part of maintaining a healthy endocrine system is stress management. Stress can cause the overproduction of hormones, leading to the malfunction of endocrine organs.

Rest: Take a day out of the week for rest and rejuvenation, allowing your mind and body to recover.

Sleep: Get 6-8 hours of sleep per night in order to reduce stress and keep hormones balanced. Stress and a lack of sleep may cause some of the glands to malfunction.

My website and office phone will continue to function while I'm away. Please contact me through those avenues to schedule appointments or ask questions before September 26. After September 26, please contact Debbie Hardin directly, either through her website or at [412-927-4768](tel:412-927-4768). She will know how to reach me if you should need to while I'm away.

I am very grateful to you for the trust you have placed in me. I sincerely hope you will place this same trust in Debbie in my absence. She does use some herbs and supplements in her work. And I will brief her regarding those of you who are currently taking herbs and supplements regularly. Debbie will be able to order the herbs and supplements you currently use, so you can continue with your present regimen. Also, if you wish to place an herb or supplement order before I begin my sabbatical, please contact me by September 15, 2013 to place the order. As I said, Debbie will also be able to order them for you.

Thank you all for your loyal patronage and support over the past 24 plus years! I hope to return to my work in April with a renewed sense of purpose and care. If you need to reach me during my sabbatical, please email me at davidm727@verizon.net. Please allow a few days for my response.

Sincerely,

David Mortell, R.Ac.

www.pittsburghacupuncturecenter.com

[412 363 0886](tel:412-363-0886)