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Treating Thyroid Problems with Acupuncture

When functioning properly, the thyroid gland secretes just the right amount of thyroid hormone to regulate almost all the metabolic processes in your body. Too much or too little of these vital body chemicals and it can drastically influence energy levels, body weight and your mental health. With over 20 million Americans living with some form of thyroid disease, much attention has been given to the many ways that acupuncture and Oriental medicine can treat thyroid problems.



What is the thyroid?

The thyroid is a butterfly shaped gland that sits in the front of the neck. It is responsible for energy, metabolism, hormone regulation, body weight and blood calcium levels. Thyroid disorders stem from either an overproduction (hyperthyroidism) or underproduction (hypothyroidism) of thyroid hormones. When your thyroid is not functioning properly, your body can experience a variety of symptoms:

Hyperthyroidism:

- Weight loss despite increased appetite
- Increased heart rate, heart palpitations, higher blood pressure, nervousness, and excessive perspiration
- More frequent bowel movements, sometimes with diarrhea
- Muscle weakness, trembling hands
- Development of a goiter (an enlargement in your neck)
- Lighter or shorter menstrual periods

Hypothyroidism:

- Lethargy, slower mental processes or depression
- Reduced heart rate
- Increased sensitivity to cold
- Tingling or numbness in the hands
- Development of a goiter (an enlargement in your neck)
- Constipation, heavy menstrual periods or dry skin and hair

Hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism can be diagnosed by testing the levels of thyroid hormones in your blood. Hormones secreted by the thyroid are measured, as well as thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), a chemical released by the pituitary gland that triggers hormone production in the thyroid. Some milder forms of hypothyroidism can also be detected by a consistently low basal body temperature.

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How to Monitor Your Basal Temperature



Blood tests may not be sensitive enough to detect milder forms of hypothyroidism. Monitoring your body's basal (resting) temperature is often used to identify a thyroid hormone deficiency.

To track your basal temperature accurately, follow these guidelines:

- Shake the thermometer below 95°F at night and place it where you can reach it without getting out of bed.
- The following morning, before you get out of bed, take your temperature via your armpit for 10 minutes while staying as still as possible.
- Keep records of your temperature for at least three days. (Women should do this during the first two weeks of the menstrual cycle, as their basal temperature may rise during the latter half.)

How can acupuncture help?

Both Western and Eastern medicine offer various methods to restore thyroid hormone levels. Western treatments rely mainly on drugs and surgery while Eastern treatments aim to restore immune function as well as balance the production and release of thyroid hormones through a variety of approaches ranging from acupuncture and herbal remedies to lifestyle changes and special exercises.

In the treatment to thyroid problems, acupuncture can be used to restore hormonal balance, regulate energy levels, smooth emotions and help manage sleep, emotions and menstrual problems. There are several powerful acupuncture points on the ear and the body that can be used to regulate the production of thyroid hormones. Treatments take all of your symptoms into account and are aimed at balancing the energy within the body to optimize health.

When it comes to lifestyle changes, a diet rich in protein, calcium, magnesium, and iodine helps support thyroid function while certain foods known as goitrogens may interfere with thyroid hormone production and should be limited. These include cruciferous vegetables (such as cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts), peanuts, and soy. Stress reducing exercises such as yoga or tai chi can also be beneficial.

If you have a thyroid problem, call for a consultation. A custom-tailored treatment plan will be created to suit your individual needs so that you can feel better quickly and safely!

Good Fats, Bad Fats: Know The Difference!

Hello Everyone,

Any discussion about dietary fats today is likely to be a negative commentary on the evils of eating foods like butter, milk, cheese, meat and eggs. This is the result of 40 years of propaganda that is based on a faulty premise. The faulty premise is that saturated fats and cholesterol are the causes of heart disease, cancer, and the myriad of other health maladies that afflict the modern world. This premise was essentially fabricated in the late 1950s, in part by the margarine and shortening industry to protect their market share. This premise holds sway today despite any real scientific verification. In fact, many studies have concluded just the opposite; that people who eat the most saturated fats and cholesterol have the least amount of heart and other chronic disease and they also live longer.

Fats are essential nutrients. The brain and central nervous system are made of more than 50% fat. Every one of our cell membranes needs fat and cholesterol to make healthy cell walls. The misinformation about dietary fats has removed many of the important natural and traditional fats from the typical Western diet, and replaced those fats with largely polyunsaturated oils and trans fats, both of which cause problems. We are starting to see the health consequences of eating bad fats, with rising rates of obesity, diabetes, heart attacks and cancer.

Historically, Americans have gotten most of their fat from meat, fish, dairy, eggs, and lard, with a small percentage coming in the form of vegetable, olive, coconut, and palm oils. That has gradually changed over the last century with the increased production and use of polyunsaturated vegetable oils, which have been touted as more healthy and heart friendly, despite evidence to the contrary.

•Normal basal body temperatures fall between 97.4° F and 97.8° F. If your basal temperature is consistently low, you could be mildly hypothyroid.

Three Foods to Support Thyroid Function



Seaweed - Iodine is an essential element that assists the thyroid in producing thyroid hormone. By increasing iodine intake, patients have seen an increase in the production of thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH). The best natural source of iodine is kelp, bladderwrack and other seaweeds.

Coconut Oil - Virgin coconut oil is praised by health experts for its ability to lower cholesterol and stabilize blood sugar. It is made up largely of medium chain fatty acids, or triglycerides (MCTs). MCTs are known to speed metabolism, promote weight loss, and raise basal body temperatures.

Brazil nuts and walnuts – These nuts contain high amounts of selenium. Many hypothyroid patients have been found to have deficiencies in th

Today, most vegetable, nut, and seed oils are extracted by a combination of heat and extraction chemicals such as hexane, which is an industrial solvent and is toxic. The oils are heated during extraction, which causes the oil to become rancid. Then it's de-gummed, neutralized, de-waxed, bleached, filtered, and deodorized to hide the rancidity! This processing allows the oils to remain 'stable', i.e., they have a longer shelf life. Longer shelf life equals more profits for the food industry.

Because polyunsaturated oils are highly subject to rancidity, they increase our need for Vitamin E and other antioxidants. This is true for all processed foods. When eaten, processed foods increase our need for other nutrients because they start out so nutrient deficient. Excess consumption of oil is especially harmful to the reproductive organs and lungs; both of which are sites for a huge increase in cancer rates in the US. Excess commercial oil consumption interferes with prostaglandin production which leads to a host of complaints ranging from PMS to autoimmune disorders. Disruption in prostaglandin production leads to an increases tendency to form blood clots and therefore heart attacks and strokes.

Trans fats are created when oils are hydrogenated. This means that a hydrogen atom has been added to the oil. Again, this benefits the food processing industry by increasing shelf life. However, research clearly shows that these products are also decreasing your shelf life! Trans fat consumption is linked to heart disease, cancer, strokes, diabetes, obesity, mental illness and immune diseases. You find trans fats in virtually every processed food available. Fast food and junk foods have high amounts of these deadly fats. Individual meals in fast food restaurants now provide several times more trans fats than they did just a decade ago for the same meal.

Healthy fats and oils are the ones that don't oxidize or get rancid quickly. Naturally occurring fats and oils that have been dietary staples for millennia are the saturated ones found in animal and plant foods - foods like meat, eggs, full fat dairy products (preferably raw!), coconut oil, palm oil, olive oil, cod liver oil. Make sure the meat and eggs and dairy are from organic and pastured animals (meaning animals that are grass fed, and are free to move around outside). Grass fed dairy and meat have more conjugated linoleic acid, which has been shown to be protective against cancer and perhaps heart disease, too! Butterfat has a beneficial impact on your heart and circulatory system, amongst its many benefits.

As much as possible avoid all vegetable oils, hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils, and trans fats. Even organic vegetable oils are suspect because they've been heated and some are chemically extracted. Read labels. Most processed and packaged foods contain hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils. Make sure your food is as close to natural as nature intended it.

To your good health,

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