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Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine for Fibromyalgia Syndrome

Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) affects an estimated 2 percent of the population. Research shows that up to 90 percent of people with fibromyalgia have turned to complementary and alternative medicine to manage their symptoms. Acupuncture, in particular, has become a popular treatment choice and has shown to be an effective treatment for fibromyalgia.

What is Fibromyalgia Syndrome?

Fibromyalgia is a medically unexplained syndrome characterized by chronic widespread pain, a heightened and painful response to pressure, insomnia, fatigue, and depression. While not all affected persons experience all associated symptoms, the following symptoms commonly occur together:

- chronic pain
- debilitating fatigue
- difficulty sleeping
- anxiety
- depression
- joint stiffness
- chronic headaches
- dryness in mouth, nose, and eyes
- hypersensitivity
- inability to concentrate (called "fibro fog")
- incontinence
- irritable bowel syndrome
- numbness, tingling or poor circulation in the hands and feet
- painful menstrual cramps
- restless legs syndrome

Fibromyalgia is diagnosed when there is a history of widespread pain in all four quadrants of the body for a minimum duration of three months and pain when pressure is applied to at least 11 of 18 designated tender points on the body. On its own fibromyalgia does not result in any physical damage to the body or its tissues and there are no laboratory tests which can confirm this diagnosis.

Symptoms often begin after a physical or emotional trauma, but in many cases there appears to be no triggering event. Women are more prone to develop the disorder than are men, and the risk of fibromyalgia increases with age.



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The National Fibromyalgia Association recommends a balanced diet containing nutrient dense foods free of artificial additives and sweeteners to help your body fight fibromyalgia syndrome.

Incorporate these nutrient rich foods in your next meal.

B-Complex

Found in whole grains, beans, nuts, chicken, fish and eggs; B complex vitamins directly influence the nervous system's proper functioning and combat nerve problems such as tingling and tenderness.

An Oriental Medicine Perspective

The Oriental medicine theory of pain is expressed in this famous Chinese saying: "*Bu tong ze tong, tong ze bu tong*" which means "*free flow: no pain, no free flow: pain.*"

Pain is seen as a disruption of the flow of Qi within the body. The disruption of Qi that results in fibromyalgia is usually associated with disharmonies of the Liver, Spleen, Kidney and Heart Systems.

The Acupuncture Treatment

Oriental Medicine does not recognize fibromyalgia as one particular disease pattern. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual relevant to their constitution, emotional state, intensity and location of their pain, digestive health, sleeping patterns and an array of other signs and symptoms. Therefore, if 10 people are treated with Oriental medicine for fibromyalgia, each of these 10 people will receive a unique, customized treatment with different acupuncture points, different herbs and different lifestyle and dietary recommendations.

Because symptoms of fibromyalgia vary greatly from one person to another, a wide array of traditional and alternative treatments have been shown to be the most effective way of treating this difficult syndrome. A treatment program may include a combination of psychological or behavioral therapies, medications, exercise, acupuncture, herbal medicine and bodywork.

If you have fibromyalgia, acupuncture and Oriental medicine may be what you've been looking for to ease your symptoms and reclaim your health and vitality. Please call for a consultation today.

Magnesium

Found in nuts, grains, beans, fish, meat and dark green vegetables magnesium is needed for muscle flexibility and bone, protein and fatty acid formation. Magnesium is also integral in making new cells, relaxing muscles, clotting blood and activating B vitamins.

Omega 3

Directly affecting cellular function this fatty acid found in fish minimizes nerve sensitivity and improves cognition.

Vitamin C

Helps combat stress, builds the immune system, and reduces swelling. Vitamin C is found in a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables including citrus fruits, green vegetables, tomatoes, and berries.

Water

Increases circulation of oxygen and nutrients throughout the body and helps to eliminate waste

Alleviate Your Fibromyalgia Symptoms

Although fibromyalgia is a disorder considered disabling by many due to chronic widespread pain and fatigue there are some things you can do to alleviate the symptoms and improve your overall quality of life.

Learn and Practice Stress Reduction Techniques

Chronic stress can lead to fatigue, depression, a weakened immune system, and a host of serious physical and psychological ailments. When under stress your muscles contract and tense affecting nerves, blood vessels, organs, skin and bones. Chronically tense muscles can result in a variety of musculoskeletal conditions and disorders including muscle spasms and pain. While it isn't always possible to remove the external forces causing stress the ability to effectively deal with stress is a choice. Take time for yourself to cultivate the energy you need to handle your stress more skillfully and effectively.

Eat a Well Balanced Diet

Managing your diet may seem time-consuming but the benefits it offers make it worthwhile. Many fibromyalgia sufferers find relief through a properly managed diet. A list of basic nutrients to combat nerve sensitivities, improve cognition, boost the immune system, and reduce swelling is included in this newsletter.

Exercise

While even basic movements may be painful exercise helps restore strength and endurance. Tai Chi, Qi Gong or Yoga are great for easy stretches, careful strengthening, deep breathing, along with relaxation techniques. The gentle stretching will clear tension that builds when muscles tighten and tense and improve overall circulation. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

Meditation: Mindful Being

The practice of meditation is a proven stress reducer that can help you tame your mind and overcome anxieties, agitation, and habitual thought patterns.

To Meditate:

Create a quiet, relaxing environment sitting upright in a chair with your feet firmly planted on the ground, allowing for free and easy breathing.

Relax your shoulders and gently place your hands on your knees or in your lap. Tuck your chin in slightly and keep your eyes half open, gaze softly focused downward about four to six feet in front, your mouth slightly open.

Observe your breath. Don't accentuate or alter the way you breathe, just let your attention rest on the flow of your breath.

Meditate

The practice of meditation is a proven stress reducer that helps the body create a sense of calm and a continuing sense of well being. While 15 minutes is recommended, even 5 or 10 minutes can have a powerful effect on your day.

Allow the "chattering" in your mind to gradually fade away. If distracted by a thought, gently refocus on your breathing.

Restorative Sleep

Get at least 8 hours of restorative sleep. Maintain a routine sleep schedule and make your bedroom a sanctuary from every day stress. Practicing good sleep hygiene will give your body an opportunity to get stronger and heal.

Focus on your breathing for 10 or 15 minutes. Stay relaxed, yet awake and attentive.

Are Cholesterol-Lowering Drugs Safe?

It is estimated that 25 million Americans are taking cholesterol lowering drugs. Most of the drugs in this class are called statins. They work by inhibiting the production of cholesterol in the liver. And by all accounts, they are effective at lowering blood levels of cholesterol, but, at what cost? And is lowering cholesterol a good thing?

There is growing evidence that clearly connects statin use with a dirty laundry list of serious, sometimes life-threatening side effects. A recent paper co-authored by Beatrice Golomb, MD, PhD cites nearly 900 studies on the adverse effects of statins. Dr. Golomb heads the University of California San Diego School of Medicine's Statin Study Group.

The current list of statins includes drugs such as Lipitor, Zocor, Crestor, Lescol, Mevacor, Pravachol, Simcor and Vytorin. All statins block the production of cholesterol by inhibiting the enzyme HMG-CoA reductase in the liver. Herein lies the potential for numerous side effects because statins also inhibit the production of other substances which have important biochemical functions.

One of these substances is ubiquinone or enzyme Co-Q10. Co-Q10 is manufactured in the cell mitochondria and plays an important role in adenosine triphosphate (ATP) production. ATP is the basic fuel of our cells. The heart especially requires high levels of Co-Q10. This enzyme is found in all cell membranes, where it helps maintain cell integrity, which is critical to nerve conduction and muscle integrity.

The muscle pain and weakness that accompanies statin use can be attributed to the lack of enzyme Co-Q10. This is also likely the cause of cardiomyopathy, or heart failure, that is increasingly being reported by statin users, as well as peripheral neuropathy (numbness, tingling, and pain in the extremities).

In the 1980s when Merck Pharmaceuticals was introducing the first statin, they were aware that Mevacor caused a deficiency of Co-Q10 and that was related to possibly causing rhabdomyolysis, which is characterized by a rapid destruction of muscle tissue that can cause kidney failure and death. This was 10 years before the statin Baycol was recalled because it caused at least 100 deaths. Since then there have been many more deaths from rhabdomyolysis, most notably from Lipitor and Crestor. In Canada and Europe, physicians are required to prescribe enzyme Co-Q10 along with statins. Why is that not required in the US? How can the FDA and Big Pharma sit by idly as patients are harmed?

Statin use has also been shown to increase all causes of death, especially in the groups of people who take statins long-term. In the Cholesterol and Recurrent Events (CARE) trial, breast cancer rates went up 1500% in the statin treatment group. The EXCEL and AFCAPS/TexCAPS statin trials demonstrated increased mortality from all causes in the treatment groups. Even for short term use in patients with heart or angina problems, use of Lipitor at a high dose did not change the rate of heart attacks or death by a significant rate.

Statins have also been shown to increase the incidence of dementia, amnesia, and Alzheimer-like symptoms. There is evidence of sexual problems, kidney and liver problems, pancreatitis, depression and cancer. To their credit, statins do seem to reduce atherosclerotic plaque, by less than 1%. With all the other risks involved with ingesting statins, this hardly seems to merit taking them. Not when there are other harmless, effective, and inexpensive ways to reduce plaque, such as fish oils, avoiding trans fats, sugar, and low fat dairy products.

To me the whole idea of high cholesterol is overblown and over-medicated. Statins are expensive, with a yearlong course costing between \$900-1400. There is just very little credible evidence to support the notion that cholesterol affects heart health. Except in rare genetic cases of familial high cholesterol, there is rarely a need to lower one's cholesterol, although I can understand prescribing a statin! drug to someone who has already had a heart attack. There does seem to be some benefit in preventing another event.

Women do not benefit from statin use, according to all the drug studies I have read. And women actually live longer and have less cancer and heart disease in direct relation to having HIGHER cholesterol numbers. The higher the better, as they age! This is true for men as well over the age of 65.

Some researchers believe that cholesterol acts as an antioxidant. As an antioxidant, cholesterol protects us from free radical damage that leads to heart disease and cancer. There is also evidence supporting the notion that cholesterol has antibacterial and antiviral properties. Current medical thinking postulates that atherosclerotic plaque begins as a viral and/or bacterial infection in the artery walls. Cholesterol seems to combat these microbes.

Big Pharma spends a total of \$64 million per day on drug advertising! (Please read that sentence again. It is not a typo!). Statins are a big money maker for the drug companies. Please question your doctor about the consequences of statin use. Read the articles at www.thincs.org. The website was started by Dr. Duane Graveline, a cardiologist who experienced serious amnesia after taking a statin. Read Dr. Uffe Ravnskov's enlightening book "The Cholesterol Myths". And if you must take a statin, please be sure to supplement with Co-Q10.

To your continued good health,

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