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Relieve Pain Naturally with Acupuncture

Increasingly, people are looking for more natural approaches to help relieve painful conditions instead of relying on medications. Acupuncture has no side effects and can be helpful for all types of pain, regardless of what is causing the pain or where the pain is located. Some studies have shown the pain relief it provides can last for months.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain before and after acupuncture treatment for pain shows dramatic decreases in brain activity -- up to 70 percent. This decrease in brain activity in certain areas of the brain is thought to be the reason for the reduction of pain caused by the acupuncture treatments.

In addition to reducing pain, acupuncture also hastens the healing process by increasing circulation and attracting white blood cells to an injured area.

The basis of acupuncture 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."

In other words, any kind of pain or illness represents an obstruction in the normal flow of Qi or life force. Simply put, acupuncture moves Qi, restoring free flow.

Studies on Acupuncture and Pain

Acupuncture has become readily accepted in mainstream modern medicine as a viable option for pain management and studies support its therapeutic effects.

In a German study, published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 1,162 adults with chronic, lower back pain were divided into groups treated with either the standard pharmaceutical and exercise therapy commonly used in conventional medicine or acupuncture. The researchers reported that acupuncture provided relief and lasting benefit to nearly twice as many lower back pain patients as drugs and exercise. Forty-eight percent of the acupuncture patients reported at least a one-third decrease in pain along with improvement in their ability to function, versus 27 percent of the patients treated with conventional methods reporting such benefits.

In another recent study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers from the University of Maryland School of Medicine analyzed 33 studies covering more than 2,100 patients from around the world on acupuncture for low back pain.



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Ah Shi Points



Not all acupuncture points have a specific name and specific location. Some of the most effective points to use in acupuncture are local points of tenderness. These points are referred to as Ah Shi points which in Chinese literally means, "That's the point!"

They found acupuncture provided definite pain relief in the short-term (defined as relief sustained for three weeks after the end of the acupuncture sessions).

If you or someone you love suffers from acute and chronic pain, please call to find out more about how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you.

Acupuncture for Low Back Pain

Low back pain is an extremely common concern, affecting anywhere from 75 to 90 percent of people at some point in their lives. Low back pain is second only to the common cold as a cause of lost days at work and is one of the most common reasons to seek medical care, including acupuncture. In fact, one of the top reasons that people get acupuncture treatments is for low back pain.

In spite of the large number of pathological conditions that can give rise to low back pain, up to 85 percent of the cases are classified by physicians as *'non-specific'*. When low back pain is examined from an Oriental medicine perspective, it is seen as a disruption to the flow of Qi within the area and associated with a specific disharmony and is treated accordingly.

The disruption of Qi that results in low back pain is usually associated with the following three disharmonies:

Weak Kidney Qi

In Oriental medicine, the lower back is referred to as the “dwelling of the Kidneys”. The majority of chronic low back pain conditions are associated with Kidney deficiency. Pain related to Kidney deficiency is typically dull and erratic. It is usually aggravated by fatigue and improves with rest.

Stagnation of Qi and Blood

When the flow of Qi along the meridians that traverse the lumbar region becomes congested, it is referred to as the stagnation of Qi and blood. This presents with a severe stabbing pain that is worse with rest and better with movement, tender to touch and can be accompanied by stiffness and tightness.

Invasion of Cold and Dampness

Cold, damp type pain is generally worse in the morning and when the weather is cold and damp. This type of pain improves with movement and the application of heat. Stiffness and contraction of back muscles that is aggravated by immobility indicates cold predominance. Swelling, numbness and a heavy sensation are indicative of dampness.

Acupuncture for Post Operative Pain

Research from Duke University Medical Center has shown that acupuncture can significantly reduce surgical patients' post-operative pain, and their need for powerful opioids to treat pain.

Duke University anesthesiologists combined data from 15 randomized clinical trials to reach their conclusion. Using acupuncture both before and after surgery produced the best results for patients, who reported lower levels of post-operative pain and a significantly reduced need for painkillers. In addition, acupuncture mitigated the negative side effects of opioids when they were used.

Ah Shi points were first mentioned during the Tang Dynasty (founded in 618 AD) classic book *Thousand Duat Prescriptions*. These points become spontaneously tender when disease or injury occurs, or in locations where Qi has become congested. They are not among the regular acupuncture points on a specific meridian or pathway.

Their locations are not fixed; they are the points that, upon palpation, are the most sensitive. In many cases a small knot or pea sized nodule can be felt under the skin at these points of tenderness.

The Ah Shi points are especially effective in the treatment of pain and are often used in conjunction with local and distal acupuncture points.

If you have pain, palpate around the area of pain to see if you can find the Ah Shi points. This is a great way to self treat the problem.

Acupuncture for Fibromyalgia Syndrome

Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) affects an estimated two percent of the population. It 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.

“The most important outcome for the patient is the reduction of the side effects associated with opioids,” said T.J. Gan, M.D., the Duke anesthesiologist who presented the study at the annual scientific conference of the American Society for Anesthesiology in San Francisco in October 2007. Gan pointed out that acupuncture is a relatively inexpensive therapy that has virtually no side effects when practiced by trained professionals.

Many other studies have shown acupuncture effective in reducing post-operative nausea and vomiting compared with other medications.

According to a meta-analysis presented at the American Society of Anesthesiologists' meeting, acupuncture reduced rates of post-operative nausea by 32 percent, pruritus (itchiness at the surgical site) by 25 percent, dizziness by 38 percent, and urinary retention by 71 percent compared with control groups.

Acupuncture is excellent for managing post-surgical side effects such as surgical pain, loss of appetite, and upset stomach or nausea. In addition to strengthening the immune system and increasing energy, acupuncture is also a great way to reduce swelling, decrease stiffness and pain, reduce scarring and scar tissue and assist with a quick recovery.

If you, or a loved one, will be undergoing surgery, please call us to see if acupuncture can improve your recovery.

Genetically Modified Foods - Are They Safe? Part II

When an insect bites into a genetically modified (GM) corn or cotton plant, it gets a mouthful of a built-in toxin, produced by every cell of the plant. Inserted genes produce an insect-killing pesticide called Bt-toxin in every cell of these GM plants. The poison splits open the bug's stomach and kills them. The bizarre thing is that these GM plants are registered as pesticides with the EPA!

Bio-tech companies claim that Bt-toxin has a history of safe use, since organic farmers and others use Bt bacteria spray for natural insect control. However, the truth is that the Bt-toxin produced in GM plants is thousands of times more concentrated and deadly than natural Bt spray. Not only is this form highly allergenic, it also kills animals. Couldn't it also be harmful for humans? The FDA is looking out for us, aren't they?

Bio-tech companies claim that U.S. government regulatory agencies like the FDA and EPA will protect consumers from the dangers of GM foods. However DDT, Thalidomide, L-Tryptophan, and other substances were approved by U.S. regulators with tragic results. Recently, it was found that 80% of supermarket milk contained traces of either medicines, illegal antibiotics used on farms, or hormones, including genetically engineered bovine growth hormone (rbGH). The facts show that our regulators are not protecting us very well.

More than 50% of the crops developed by biotechnology companies have been engineered to be resistant to herbicides. Use of these herbicide-resistant crops will lead to a three-fold increase in the use of herbicides, resulting in even greater pollution of our food and water with toxic agrichemicals. This increase in herbicide use also promotes the development of weeds that are herbicide-resistant. These new 'superweeds' can lower farm yields and raise costs for farmers because they have to use ever more chemicals to kill the weeds!

Research shows that as many as 90 percent of people with fibromyalgia have turned to complimentary 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 FMS.

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 depending on their constitution, emotional state, the intensity and location of their pain, digestive health, sleeping patterns and an array of other signs and symptoms.

A treatment program may include a combination of psychological or behavioral therapies, medications, exercise, acupuncture, herbal medicine and bodywork.

If you have fibromyalgia call today to see how acupuncture can ease your symptoms!

For many years, biotech companies have lauded GM plants as higher-yield crops. They have claimed GM crops will feed more people and help with world hunger. From the start, however, GM crops have performed no better than their non-GM counterparts. The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development report, authored by more than 400 scientists and backed by 58 governments, stated that GM crop yields were "highly variable" and in some cases, "yields declined". In other words they are no better in terms of yield than conventional crops.

The Union of Concerned Scientists' 2009 report "Failure to Yield" is the definitive study to date on GM crops and yield. Authored by former U.S. EPA scientist Doug Gurian-Sherman, PhD, it is based on published, peer-reviewed studies conducted by academic scientists using adequate controls. The study concludes that GM soybeans and corn have not increased yields. Dr. Gurian-Sherman states that "traditional breeding outperforms genetic engineering hands down".

So why are we using a technology that has so many risks with little or no upside? According to a multi-year study in Africa by the United Nations, "organic agriculture has clearly produced increases in food production. Moreover, a switch to organic farming methods has led to other improvements including environmental improvements, strengthened communities, improvements in the education and health of individuals and a reduction in poverty". Those all sound like good things to me!

If you are as concerned about GM foods as I am, you will want to know how to protect yourself and your loved ones from these dangerous products. As much as is possible, buy organic food. Almost all organic-labeled foods are GMO-free. Yes, organic foods are more expensive, but in the long run they are cheaper because they are healthier for you and the planet! Support local organic farmers by buying at farmer's markets or joining a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

Pittsburgh has a lot of organic farms. Take advantage. Make sure you eat 100% grass-fed meats and pastured poultry and eggs. When you garden, make sure your seeds and plants are also organic, or at least non-GMO. There's a great website www.nongmoshoppingguide.com that gives detailed information about how to buy safely.

To your continued good health!

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