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**Treatment of Neurological Disorders with Acupuncture**

A neurological disorder refers to a problem with the nervous system, which is a complex, sophisticated system that regulates and coordinates the body's activities. Nerve pain can arise from trauma, inflammation, stroke, disease, infection, nerve degeneration, exposure to toxic chemicals, and nutrient deficiencies.



Nerve pain is usually a sharp shooting pain or a constant burning sensation. Typically occurring in the same location with each episode, it can often be traced along the nerve pathway. Sometimes weakness or impaired function in the affected area occurs and the skin may be either overly sensitive or numb.

**Some common neurological disorders acupuncture treats include:**

Peripheral Neuropathy - damage to the peripheral nervous system, which transmits information from the brain and spinal cord to every other part of the body. Neuropathy caused by diabetes often affects the feet.

Trigeminal Neuralgia - facial pain, sometimes called Tic Douloureux, affects the trigeminal nerve which is responsible for impulses of touch, pain, pressure and temperature sent to the brain from the face, jaw, and gums.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome - also known as median nerve entrapment, it occurs when swelling or irritation of the nerve or tendons in the carpal tunnel results in pressure on the median nerve.

Headaches - Headaches that can be treated with acupuncture include migraines, tension headaches, headaches occurring around the menstrual cycle, sinus headaches and stress-related headaches.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine have been found effective as a conjunctive therapy for several neurological disorders and in treating pain and inflammation.

**If you or someone you know is suffering from a neurological disorder or nerve pain please contact us for more information or to schedule an appointment!**

**Acupuncture Treats Peripheral Neuropathy**

Peripheral neuropathy describes damage to the peripheral nervous system, which transmits information from the brain and spinal cord to every other part of the body. In most cases, peripheral neuropathy is secondary to conditions such as diabetes, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, scleroderma, alcoholism, nutritional deficiencies, AIDS, or poisoning from heavy metals, chemotherapy, or various drugs.

Other causes include direct physical injury to a nerve (trauma), penetrated injuries, fractures or dislocated bones, pressure involving superficial nerves (ulna or radial) which can result from prolonged use of crutches or staying in same position, tumor, intraneural hemorrhage, exposure to cold, compression or entrapment (i.e. carpal tunnel syndrome), radiation or atherosclerosis.

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**Foods to Boost Brain Health**



Boost your brain's overall health and enhance its day to day functioning by including these foods in a healthy well-balanced diet.

**Blueberries** - Well known for their role in improving motor skills and overall learning capacity, blueberries are rich in antioxidants that are great for boosting your brain and helping to reverse the effects of aging on the brain. Most berries contain fisetin and flavenoid, which are great for improving your memory and allowing you to easily recall past events.

### **Symptoms of peripheral neuropathy may include:**

- numbness or insensitivity to pain or temperature
- burning, tingling, or prickling sensation
- sharp or burning pain
- cramps
- extreme sensitivity to touch
- loss of balance and coordination,
- muscle weakness
- muscle wasting
- paralysis

Oriental medicine teaches that peripheral neuropathy is due to dampness moving to the limbs, where it obstructs the flow of Qi (energy) and blood within them. The treatment is twofold, to treat the underlying factor that is causing this dampness to accumulate and to directly facilitate the circulation of Qi and blood in the affected area. By improving circulation, the nerve tissues of the affected area can be nourished to repair function and reduce pain.

Peripheral neuropathy is a symptom for many different patterns of disharmony within the body. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine aims to treat each individual uniquely depending on what caused the neuropathy and how it manifests.

**Do you or someone you know suffer from peripheral neuropathy? Contact us today to find out what acupuncture and Oriental medicine can do for you!**

## **Relief for Carpal Tunnel Syndrome**

One of the most common job-related injuries, carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is responsible for the highest number of days lost among all work-related injuries. With more than two million visits to physicians' offices and approximately 465,000 carpal tunnel release operations each year, it is the most frequent surgery of the hand and wrist.

Acupuncture is extremely effective at treating carpal tunnel syndrome, eliminating the need for surgery or the use of anti-inflammatory drugs or corticosteroids and recent studies suggest that acupuncture may be more effective than corticosteroids when it comes to treating carpal tunnel syndrome.

### **What Is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome?**

The carpal tunnel is a narrow passageway in the wrist made up of ligaments and bones. The median nerve and the tendons that connect the fingers to the muscles of the forearm pass through this tightly spaced tunnel. Carpal tunnel syndrome, also known as median nerve entrapment, occurs when swelling or irritation of the nerve or tendons in the carpal tunnel results in pressure on the median nerve. The median nerve controls sensations to the palm side of the thumb and fingers, as well as impulses to some small muscles in the hand that allow the fingers and thumb to move.

Symptoms usually start gradually, with frequent burning, tingling, or numbness in the palm of the hand and the fingers, especially the thumb, index and middle fingers. The symptoms often first appear during the night. As symptoms worsen, people might feel pain, weakness, or numbness in the hand and wrist, radiating up the arm during the day. Decreased grip strength may make it difficult to form a fist, grasp small objects, or perform other manual tasks. If not properly treated, carpal tunnel syndrome can cause irreversible nerve damage and permanent deterioration of muscle tissue.

**Fish** - Omega-3 rich wild salmon, tuna, and herring help brain function by providing more oxygen, allowing it to retain new information while remembering old information. It also coats neurons with good fat, allowing them to move easier through the brain. Eating one serving of fish a week can decrease your chances of getting Alzheimer's.

**Leafy Green Vegetables** - Vegetables such as cabbage, kale, spinach, collards, turnip greens and others are rich in vitamins, folate, and iron, all of which are essential for memory recall and increasing cognitive activity.

**Nuts/Seeds** - Rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, folate, vitamin E, vitamin B6 and zinc all of which allow you to think more clearly. Choose seeds and nuts rich in thiamine and magnesium, which are great for memory, cognitive function, and brain nourishment.

**Whole Grains** - Rich in folate, thiamine, vitamin B6, and zinc, the nutrients found in whole grains increase blood flow to the brain, improving the quality and quantity of brain function and recall.

## Diagnosis and Treatment of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome with Acupuncture

From an Oriental medicine perspective, carpal tunnel syndrome is seen as a disruption of the flow of Qi and blood within the area and is associated with cold, dampness or wind penetrating the muscles and sinews of the wrist. In addition to reducing swelling, inflammation, and pain in the wrist, acupuncture addresses any headaches, neck pain, shoulder stiffness and sleeping problems that often accompany this condition. Your treatment may also take into account underlying conditions that contribute to the development of carpal tunnel syndrome including obesity, rheumatoid arthritis, thyroid problems, diabetes, and hormonal changes due to pregnancy and menopause.

**If you or someone you know suffers from carpal tunnel syndrome, please call to find out more about how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you.**

## THE THYROID GLAND: The Master Regulator - Part II

Sleep apnea, insomnia, acid reflux, slow digestion, constipation, fatigue, weight gain, menstrual and menopausal problems, infertility, low libido, erectile dysfunction, dry skin and other skin problems, hair loss, poor concentration and memory, migraines, allergies and sinus problems, arthritis, depression, anxiety .....and those are just SOME of the problems that low thyroid can cause or aggravate!

There are many causes of low thyroid function. Environmental toxins and heavy metals like lead, mercury, and cadmium can suppress thyroid activity. Halogen toxicity from the chlorine and fluoride that are routinely added to your drinking water inhibits the thyroid gland.

Soy foods inhibit the thyroid, despite all the marketing hype about the health benefits of soy. The polyunsaturated fatty acids, or PUFAs, found in vegetable oils like corn, canola, safflower, soy, and nut oils can damage the thyroid. (Olive oil, coconut oil, and butter are healthier oils to use.) These PUFAs are also present in commercial, grain-fed meat, poultry, dairy products, and eggs. PUFAs use up oxygen in the cells, causing an oxygen deficit in the cells, which slows your metabolic rate.

Some prescription drugs can lower thyroid function. Birth control pills and any other form of estrogen supplementation inhibits thyroid.

A lack of dietary iodine is a primary cause of thyroid problems. Your thyroid needs iodine and the amino acid tyrosine to make thyroid hormones. Good dietary sources of these two nutrients are fish, shellfish, milk products, and sea vegetables.

Stress is another critical factor in hypothyroidism. High stress levels cause high levels of the adrenal hormone cortisol. This triggers the 'fight or flight' response of the sympathetic nervous system, which is a good thing when you are in danger of being eaten by a saber-toothed tiger, but not so good as a chronic response to every day events. The high cortisol levels suppresses your liver's detoxification functions. This leads to higher estrogen levels. Estrogen, as I mentioned earlier, slows down thyroid function and that can lead to many other problems such as weight gain, fluid retention, fatigue, etc. Estrogen causes inflammation everywhere in your body. That inflammation is a contributing factor in many illnesses like arthritis, muscle aches and pains, heart disease, cancer, and auto-immune diseases.

Thyroid hormones help regulate digestion and elimination. They do this by influencing the production of stomach acid and digestive enzymes. Inadequate stomach acid is the underlying reason for many cases of acid reflux disease. The use of antacids and proton pump inhibitor medicines like Prilosec and Nexium worsens the problem by inhibiting stomach acid production further. These medicines also contribute to osteopenia and osteoporosis by inhibiting the absorption of calcium from the gut.

That hypothyroidism is a cause of menstrual irregularities has been commonly accepted in mainstream medicine for close to 100 years. Among these irregularities are infertility, cysts, fibroids, endometriosis, painful and/or heavy periods, miscarriage, and menopausal complaints.

## Trigeminal Neuralgia

One of the largest nerves in the head, the trigeminal nerve is responsible for impulses of touch, pain, pressure and temperature sent to the brain from the face, jaw, and gums. Characterized by a sudden, severe, electric shock-like or stabbing pain felt on one side of the jaw or cheek, these periodic attacks of pain generally last a few seconds and may be repeated one after the other.

The exact cause of trigeminal neuralgia is not known; however, physical nerve damage and stress can trigger painful attacks. Damage may also be the result of a biochemical change in the nerve tissue itself or an abnormal blood vessel compressing the nerve as it exits from the brain. In almost all cases, an excessive burst of nervous activity from a damaged nerve causes the painful attacks.

Acupuncture is considered a safe, adjunctive therapeutic option in patients with trigeminal neuralgia especially before invasive intervention is done.

Heart disease may also be related to low thyroid. Thyroid hormones control cholesterol levels, which raises the possibility that hypothyroidism is at least a contributor to hardening of the arteries. Thyroid deficiencies can lead to accelerated blood clotting ( the clot may block an artery), as well as increased blood pressure and excessive fatigue; all of which increases the risk of stroke and heart attack.

Hypothyroidism retards bone remodeling (and tissue repair in general), which contributes to the weaker and thinner bones of osteopenia and osteoporosis. As I mentioned earlier, the thyroid controls digestion to a large degree. If your stomach acid is weak, your body won't absorb as much calcium from your food, which compounds the bone issues.

Your thyroid is intimately involved with so many things, it is well worth checking to see if yours is healthy. In the December newsletter, I will discuss how you can assess the health of this very important gland.

To your continued health,

David Mortell, R.Ac.

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