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Revitalize Your Digestive Health With Acupuncture

More than 95 million Americans suffer from digestive disorders ranging from constipation, diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome to more serious conditions such as acid reflux (GERD), ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. In fact, more than 35 million physician office visits a year are due to gastrointestinal complaints. Reports are confirming that acupuncture and Oriental medicine can offer relief from even the most complex digestive problems.



Diagnosis and Treatment of Digestive Disorders

Evidence that Oriental medicine has been used for digestive disorders can be found in early medical literature dating back to 3 AD, where specific acupuncture points and herbal formulas for borborygmus (rumbling or gurgling in the intestines), abdominal pain and diarrhea with pain are discussed.

According to Oriental medical theory, most digestive disorders are due to disharmony in the spleen and stomach. The spleen plays a central part in the health and vitality of the body, taking a lead role in the assimilation of nutrients and maintenance of physical strength. It turns digested food from the stomach into usable nutrients and qi (energy). Many schools of thought have been formed around this organ; the premise being that the proper functioning of the "middle" is the key to all aspects of vitality.

By taking into account a person's constitution and varied symptoms, a treatment plan is designed specifically for the individual to bring their "middle" back into harmony and optimize the proper functioning of the digestive system. A variety of techniques can be used during treatment including acupuncture, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore digestive health.

Is your digestive system functioning as well as it could? Acupuncture and Oriental medicine are extremely effective at treating a wide array of digestive disorders. Please call us for more information or to schedule an appointment.

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Reduce Your Risk of Getting Food Poisoning



Four simple steps to reducing the occurrence of food poisoning are to clean, separate, cook and chill.

Clean: Wash hands, surfaces, utensils and platters often. Rinse all produce in cold running water before peeling, cutting or eating.

Separate: Keep foods that won't be cooked separate from raw meat and poultry. Don't use the same platter and utensils for raw and cooked meats and poultry.

Acupuncture Treats Food Poisoning

Food poisoning arises from eating contaminated foods containing a variety of microorganisms including bacteria, viruses and parasites and is also known as food-borne illness, infectious diarrhea, or gastroenteritis. The most common bacteria to cause food poisoning are salmonella, staphylococcus aureus, E. coli and shigella. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can relieve symptoms, hasten recovery and strengthen the digestive system to prevent future incidents of food poisoning, avert development of chronic immune deficiencies and increase energy levels.

Food poisoning is marked by severe diarrhea, fever, cramping, abdominal pain, flu-like symptoms, vomiting and diarrhea. Most cases of food poisoning clear up on their own within a week without any medical assistance; however, it can take several months before bowel habits return to normal. Often the digestive system is severely weakened after a bout of food poisoning, making the infected person more susceptible to food poisoning in the future. A small number of persons with food poisoning develop an autoimmune disease called Reiter's syndrome. It can last for months or years and can lead to chronic arthritis.

Treatment of food poisoning is rest and hydration to prevent fluid and electrolyte loss due to vomiting and diarrhea. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be used to relieve nausea and vomiting, hasten recovery by assisting the body to eliminate the pathogen faster, and strengthen the digestive system to prevent any re-occurrences or development of a chronic immune disorder. After acute symptoms subside, acupuncture treatments focus on strengthening the digestive system and improving energy levels to bring about a full recovery

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and Acupuncture

A common disorder affecting 10 to 20 percent of adults at some point in their lives, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) was once called "spastic colon" and has a combination of symptoms that may include constipation, diarrhea, gas, bloating, fatigue and headaches that can be worsened by certain foods, stress and other irritants. IBS is the end result of nervous interference with the normal function of the lower digestive tract. The symptoms are variable and change over time.

While other patterns may be present, IBS is typically considered a disharmony between the liver and the spleen in Oriental medicine. The liver is responsible for the smooth flow of qi and blood throughout the body. This flow can be upset by emotions or stress, causing stagnation of qi or blood. Oriental medicine views the spleen as being associated with the function of digestion and transforming food into energy (qi and blood). The spleen can be weakened by a number of factors including overeating unhealthy foods, overwork, stress, fatigue, and lack of exercise. When the spleen is weak and the liver is not moving smoothly, the liver overacts on the spleen and can manifest as symptoms of IBS. Symptoms can be managed by avoiding overeating, exercise, identifying trigger foods and reducing stress.

Do you suffer from Irritable Bowel Syndrome? Call today to see how Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can improve your quality of life!

Cook: Cook food to a safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria.

Chill: Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers.

If you are ill with diarrhea or vomiting, do not prepare food for others, especially infants, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems since they are more vulnerable to infection.

Ginger for Intestinal Upset

Ginger has been found to increase the secretion of gastric juice and the production of hydrochloric acid. This means that food is digested more quickly, creating an unfriendly environment for bacteria that could wreak havoc with your stomach and intestines.

Ginger works as well at treating the symptoms of food poisoning as it does preventing them. In fact, ginger can be used for most digestive upsets that involve nausea, vomiting, cramping, abdominal pain, indigestion or diarrhea.

Whether your digestive problem is due to eating contaminated food, stomach flu, pregnancy or motion sickness, ginger is one of the most effective agents around!

THE THYROID GLAND: The Master Regulator - Part 1

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland that is located at the front of the neck at the approximate level of the Adam's apple. It produces thyroid hormones that regulate the body's metabolism and much more.

The principal hormones secreted by the thyroid are triiodothyronine or T-3, and thyroxine or T-4. Because nearly 80% of the thyroid gland's production is devoted to T-4, thyroxine is often called "the thyroid hormone". Nonetheless, T-3 is functionally the more important thyroid hormone because it does up to 90% of the work of the thyroid in the body. The thyroid gland is stimulated to produce T-3 and T-4 by the pituitary gland's production and secretion of thyroid stimulating hormone, or TSH.

Proper thyroid function requires conversion of T-4 into the more metabolically active T-3. This conversion takes place primarily in the liver and kidneys. T-3 is used by your cells' mitochondria, in the presence of glucose and oxygen, to produce Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP), your cells' basic fuel. It powers cell activity and allows your body to produce energy. Without adequate amounts of thyroid hormone, especially T-3, you simply will feel tired a lot, as well as experiencing a host of other maladies.

The most common method that conventional medicine uses to assess thyroid function is to measure the blood levels of TSH, T-3, and T-4. If the blood levels of TSH are in the normal range, your thyroid is considered to be normal and no treatment is given. Some healthcare practitioners, including me, think these blood tests are limited in determining thyroid function, and the results can be misleading.

Your thyroid may be making enough T-4, but it might not be converting it into the more active T-3 form. If the conversion is not happening efficiently enough, you will still have hypothyroid symptoms, even if you are taking a thyroid medication, most of which are pure, or mostly pure T-4 like Synthroid and Levothyroxine.

So why the concern with thyroid function? Because over and over in my private practice, I see clients who exhibit signs of low thyroid function. They are suffering from fatigue, low libido, menstrual problems, migraines, various aches and pains, insomnia, dry skin, hair loss, and a host of other maladies, but they have been told that there is nothing wrong with them. Their blood work is normal, but they still feel bad. What's going on?

Up until the 1960s, a patient's basal temperature was a primary indicator that a physician considered in assessing thyroid function. A normal basal temperature, our body temperature upon waking, is between 97.8 and 98.2. If your basal temperature is below 97.8, then the physician of yesteryear would suspect a diagnosis of hypothyroidism. Thyroid hormone, especially T-3, regulates body temperature. If your basal body temperature is low, it logically follows that you don't have enough T-3 if your temperature is below normal.

Today, basal temperature is not considered a significant indicator of thyroid function. Blood tests are considered the gold standard for hypothyroid diagnosis. Patients' thyroids are treated, or not, mostly based on blood levels of TSH. Sometimes a more complete blood thyroid panel of blood tests is performed, but usually not, if the TSH falls within the normal range.

In the majority of cases it seems that the clinical significance of T-3, the biologically active thyroid hormone, is being ignored during diagnosis and treatment. There is currently no blood test that evaluates the conversion of T-4 into T-3. Many people are not getting help because of this oversight. Charting basal temperatures would help get more people diagnosed and treated.

In Part 2 of this segment, we will explore the multitude of causes of hypothyroidism, including diet, inherited genetic tendencies, and other stressors such as environmental toxins and heavy metals.

To your continued good health,

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