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## Keep Your Skin Healthy with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be very effective at treating skin conditions. Treatments can provide quick relief for acute symptoms as well as significant and lasting relief from recurrent or chronic skin conditions.

The skin reflects and reacts to imbalances within the body's internal landscape and the effects of the environment. Internal disharmonies caused by strong emotions, diet, and your constitution can contribute to the development of a skin disorder.

Environmental influences, such as wind, dryness, dampness, and heat can also trigger or exacerbate skin disorders.

To keep your skin healthy and beautiful on the outside, you must work on the inside of your body as well. Increasing the flow of energy, blood and lymph circulation improves the skin's natural healthy color. Promotion of collagen production increases muscle tone and elasticity helping to firm the skin. Stimulating the formation of body fluids nourishes the skin, adding moisture and making it softer, smoother and more lustrous.

General skin conditions that can be treated with acupuncture and Oriental medicine include acne, dermatitis, eczema, pruritus, psoriasis, rosacea, shingles and urticaria (hives). Evidence that Acupuncture and herbal medicine have been used for skin disorders, such as hives, can be found in early medical literature dating back to 3 AD. Medicinal plants and stone needles were utilized to relieve and cure discomforts of the external areas of the body.

Oriental medicine does not recognize skin problems as one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques including acupuncture, herbal medicine, bodywork, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 10 patients are treated with Oriental medicine for eczema, each patient will receive a unique, customized treatment with different lifestyle and dietary recommendations.

Acupuncture views nutrition in a complex light, through the application of Oriental medicine wisdom to dietary habits. In short, certain foods are considered too yang, or hot, to eat in excess during the warmer months, while others are prized for their yin ability to cool the body. Overall, the goal is balance between the internal yin and yang of the body. A healthy, nutritional diet, good sleep and moderate exercise can keep your skin and physical form at its best.

**If you suffer from a skin condition or would like to know how to optimize your skin health, call today to find out more about how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you**



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## Foods to Help You Look Your Best



Be sure to integrate these items into your diet to help keep you looking your best:

**Vitamin A:** Acting as an antioxidant to neutralize harmful elements in our skin, vitamin A helps to prevent wrinkles, resist infection and maintain the skin's elasticity. One of the best places to get vitamin A is from vegetables that are deep orange in color, such as carrots or sweet potatoes.

## Treating Hives with Acupuncture

Hives (urticaria) are swollen and red, bumps, patches or welts on the skin that appear suddenly. Itching is the most common symptom associated with hives, although some people report that hives cause a stinging or burning sensation.

Hives can occur anywhere on the body including the hands, face, lips, tongue, throat, or ears. A sign that the whole body is experiencing a hypersensitivity reaction, a hives outbreak can occur due to a wide array of stimuli. While intolerance to certain foods, additives, intense emotions, sunlight exposure, and medications can all cause hives, in 70-75 percent of outbreaks the exact cause of hives remains unknown.

Whether lasting for just a few minutes, a few hours or persisting for several weeks, hives are rarely a medical emergency. However, in some cases they are the first sign of a strong allergic reaction to something and can be accompanied by shock or difficulty breathing, which can be life threatening. About 20 percent of people will experience hives (urticaria) at some point in their lives.

While standard treatment for acute cases of hives involves antihistamines or a corticosteroid drug to relieve symptoms, many people are turning to acupuncture and Oriental medicine to address underlying imbalances that cause this condition and help stop recurrent outbreaks.

In Oriental medicine, an outbreak of hives is described as *wind invading the skin and the meridians*, causing itching and swelling. When the eruptions are red, it is an indication that *wind* and *heat* are involved. When the eruptions are a pale pink or white, it is likely that the diagnosis will be *wind-cold invading the skin*. How the condition is diagnosed will determine what acupuncture points are used, what herbal medicines are prescribed and what lifestyle/dietary recommendations are made.

Treatments are directed at addressing both the cause and the symptoms by providing immediate relief from the itching and swelling and addressing the underlying imbalances and triggers that are causing the condition.

A study published in the Internet Journal of Dermatology examined the efficacy of acupuncture in the treatment of chronic hives (urticaria). The results showed that acupuncture was able to reduce both episode rate and episode duration of urticaria by as much as 25 percent. After three weeks the majority of the acupuncture treated patients experienced partial remission of their symptoms. The researchers also noted that the greatest improvements were seen in the third week of treatments and that the efficacy of acupuncture seemed to increase with each treatment.

## Dietary Causes of Heart Disease

Conventional wisdom says, and has been saying for the past 40 years, that dietary cholesterol and saturated fats cause heart disease. While there is clear evidence that trans fats contribute to heart disease, and the ingestion of polyunsaturated fats contributes heavily, too, there is no such proof that saturated fats and cholesterol cause heart disease *unless* the cholesterol has become oxidized.

Cholesterol and fats can become oxidized in a number of ways, but the main ways are eating foods fried in reused oils and fats, and through the ingestion of polyunsaturated fats. Smoking also causes cholesterol to be oxidized. Cooking and eating commercially-raised, grain-fed meats is another way to get oxidized cholesterol and fat.

### **Blackberries, Blueberries, Strawberries, and Plums:**

Antioxidants and other phytochemicals in these fruits can protect cells from damage and disintegration, thus guarding against premature aging. In a study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, these four fruits weighed in with the highest "total antioxidant capacity" of any food.

### **Essential Fatty Acids**

**(EFAs):** Responsible for skin repair, moisture content, and flexibility, and because the body cannot produce its own, EFAs must be obtained from diet. Fish, walnuts, and flaxseed oil are great sources of omega 3 fatty acids.

**Selenium:** An antioxidant mineral responsible for tissue elasticity and healthy skin selenium can be found in brown rice, turkey, tuna and Brazil nuts

**Green Tea:** Green tea's ability to slow down the development of some signs of aging is attributed to its high levels of *polyphenols*, which have been well-documented for their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

**Water:** Essential to maintaining your skin's elasticity and suppleness, hydration plays a key role in keeping skin cells healthy. Hydration helps cells move nutrients in and toxins out to keep skin clean and clear.

Grain-fed animals have a much higher polyunsaturated fat content than grass-fed meats. The same is true for dairy products made from milk from grain-fed animals. Low-fat and non-fat dairy products from grain-fed animals are even worse because they also often contain powdered milk, which is pure oxidized cholesterol. In fact, powdered milk has been used for decades by researchers to induce heart disease in lab animals!

Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) help to regulate inflammation in our bodies. For example, normal inflammatory processes stimulate the immune system, but if inflammation is chronic, from stress and dietary factors, the immune system is suppressed. So PUFAs become problematic when they are eaten to excess. The average American eats far too many of this type of fatty acid and too few saturated fats. Polyunsaturated fats are found in vegetable oils, grains, beans, seeds, nuts, and in grain-fed dairy and meats.

PUFAs undergo oxidation easily in our bodies. Because polyunsaturated fats are unstable molecules, they are easily converted to free radicals and something called eicosanoids, which have a wide range of damaging effects, including systemic inflammation.

According to Dr. Fred Kummerow, a 98 year old professor emeritus researcher at the University of Illinois, oxidized cholesterol and other oxidized lipids like trans fats and PUFAs, contribute to heart disease both by increasing calcium deposits on the artery walls, which is a major marker for heart disease, and by interrupting blood flow, which can cause heart attack and sudden death.

Over his 60-plus year research career, Kummerow has painstakingly collected and analyzed findings that together reveal the underlying mechanisms linking oxidized cholesterol and fats to heart disease. Kummerow was one of the scientists called to testify before the McGovern Commission that in the early 1970s was commissioned to establish dietary recommendations for the American public. His views, which disagreed with the view that saturated fat and cholesterol led to heart disease, were ignored by the commission. The McGovern Commission dietary recommendations have held sway over our dietary psyche for the past 40 years.

According to data from the US Department of Agriculture, from 1912 through 2011, consumption of polyunsaturated fat has increased from a per capita average of 11.3 pounds annually to 64.5 pounds per person annually. And during that same time, saturated fat intake has decreased from 28 pounds to 13.4 pounds per capita. Worldwide, 7.2 million people die annually from heart attacks. That number is rising each year, especially in developed nations.

Avoid trans fats at all costs. These include margarines, hydrogenated oils found in baked goods, potato chips, french fries, etc. Even when the food label says "no trans fats", legally the food is allowed to have up to one half gram of trans fat in it. They may not sound like much, but it's significant where your arteries are concerned. Eat grass-fed dairy products and meats, particularly avoiding no- or low-fat foods. Use butter, coconut oil or palm kernel oil for cooking. And in general, avoid as much refined foods as you can.

To your continued good health!

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