



David Mortell Licensed Acupuncturist
Pittsburgh Acupuncture Center
 5655 Bryant Street
 Pittsburgh, PA 15206
 412-363-0886

Treating Autoimmune Disease with Acupuncture

Over 50 million Americans suffer from autoimmune disease; an autoimmune disease occurs when the body's immune system attacks healthy tissue. Autoimmune disorders include Rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, thyroid disease, Addison's disease, pernicious anemia, celiac disease, multiple sclerosis, myasthenia gravis and Guillain-Barré syndrome. Due to the complexity of treating autoimmune disorders, integrative medicine solutions including acupuncture and Oriental medicine have received much attention as successful therapies in their treatment. Acupuncture is specifically noted for its use in pain relief, regulating the immune system, managing symptoms and improving quality of life.



What Causes Autoimmune Disease?

Under normal conditions, an immune response cannot be triggered against the cells of one's own body. In certain cases, however, immune cells make a mistake and attack the very cells that they are meant to protect. This can lead to a variety of autoimmune diseases. They encompass a broad category of over 100 diseases in which the person's immune system attacks his or her own tissue.

The exact mechanisms causing these changes are not completely understood, but bacteria, viruses, toxins, and some drugs may play a role in triggering an autoimmune process in someone who already has a genetic (inherited) predisposition to develop such a disorder. It is theorized that the inflammation initiated by these agents, toxic or infectious, somehow provokes in the body a "sensitization" (autoimmune reaction) in the involved tissues.

As the disease develops vague symptoms start to appear, such as joint and muscle pain, general muscle weakness, possible rashes or low-grade fever, trouble concentrating, or weight loss. The following symptoms may point toward something being wrong: numbness and tingling in hands and feet, dry eyes, hair loss, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, or repeated miscarriages can also be caused by an autoimmune response.

How Acupuncture Treats Autoimmune Disorders

According to Oriental medicine, autoimmune disorders occur when there is imbalance within the body. Imbalance can come from an excess or deficiency of yin and yang that disrupts the flow of qi, or vital energy, through the body. Acupuncture is used to help the body restore balance, treating the root of the disorder, while specifically addressing the symptoms that are unique to each individual.

Clinical research has shown that acupuncture causes physical responses in nerve cells, the pituitary gland, and parts of the brain. These responses can cause the body to release proteins, hormones, and brain chemicals that control a number of body functions. It is proposed that, by these actions, acupuncture affects blood pressure, body temperature and the immune system.

In addition to acupuncture, your treatment program to manage your autoimmune

In This Issue

Treating Autoimmune Disease with Acupuncture
Acupuncture Effective for Crohn's Disease
6 Food Tips for Autoimmune Disorders

6 Food Tips for Autoimmune Disorders



A class of plant chemicals known as bioflavonoids has been found to dramatically reduce inflammation and improve symptoms associated with autoimmune disorders.

Tea: Both green and black tea contain the flavonoids, catechins and theaflavins, which are beneficial in autoimmune disease.

Apples: Apples, contain the flavanoid, quercetin that can reduce allergic reactions and decrease inflammation. Quercetin occurs naturally in certain foods, such as apples (with the skin on), berries, red grapes, red onions, capers, and black tea.

Carrots: Carotenoids are a family of plant pigments that include beta-carotene. A lack of carotenoids in the diet is thought to promote inflammation. Good sources of carotenoids include apricots, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, spinach, kale, butternut squash, and collard greens.

disorder may involve a combination of therapies including stress reducing exercises, moderate physical activity, herbal medicine, nutritional support and bodywork.

To learn more about how acupuncture can safely and effectively be incorporated into care for people with an autoimmune disorder, please call for a consultation today.

Acupuncture Effective for Crohn's Disease

In a study published in the journal, *Digestion*, acupuncture was found effective for treating Crohn's disease.

Crohn's disease is an autoimmune disease which involves chronic inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract. The main symptoms of Crohn's disease are abdominal pain, fever, fatigue and persistent, watery diarrhea. Symptoms range from mild to severe, and can come and go with periods of flare-ups.



In this German study, 51 patients with mild to moderately active Crohn's disease had a decrease in disease activity after receiving 10 sessions of acupuncture. Study members also showed an improvement in general well-being and reported an improvement in quality of life.

Source: Joos S, Brinkhaus B, Maluche C, Maupai N, Kohnen R, Kraehmer N, Hahn EG, Schuppan D. Acupuncture and moxibustion in the treatment of active Crohn's disease: a randomized controlled study. *Digestion*. 2004;69(3):131-9.

Ginger: Recent studies show that ginger reduces inflammation by inhibiting prostaglandin and suppresses the immune system's production of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines, reducing disease severity in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Omega-3: Omega-3 essential fatty acids can counter the formation of chemicals that cause inflammation. Good natural sources include flaxseed oil and salmon.

Fiber: A healthy and active colon can decrease food sensitivity, which, in turn, can lighten the burden on your immune system. For maximum autoimmune health, increase the fiber in your diet.

Acupuncture and Cancer

Hello all,

Over the past 2 years I have had the opportunity to assist a number of clients with their cancer treatments. All of them have used acupuncture and herbal medicine as complementary therapies while they underwent conventional cancer care. I am happy to share with you my findings as a result of my experience working with them.

As acupuncture and Chinese medicine gain credence in the West, they are increasingly being used in conjunction with conventional western medicine to treat a range of illnesses, including cancer. Acupuncture has received much attention for its use in cancer pain, and post-operative and chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting. The American Cancer Society has recommended its use for cancer and cancer-related symptoms like neuropathy, limb edema, and pain. Acupuncture can also help increase energy and appetite as it boosts immunity and relieves stress in patients undergoing cancer treatments.

Cancer arises from abnormal changes in the genetic makeup of cells that causes the malignant cells to multiply uncontrollably. In Chinese medicine this is known as the "Yin and Yang separating", in which the functional activity of the cell (Yang) loses touch with the intelligent guidance (Yin) of the cell's activity. In conventional medicine several factors are believed to trigger the cell mutations which cause cancer including genetic heredity, immune dysfunction, diet, extreme stress, hormone therapy, and environmental toxins.

Common conventional cancer therapies include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy, and hormone therapy. All these can be very helpful, but they also cause side effects such as nausea and vomiting, malaise, fatigue, neuropathies, decreased immune activity, lack of appetite, and post-surgical and other pain.

The traditional Chinese medicine treatment of cancer is based on the principle of Fu Zheng Pei Ben. Fu Zheng therapy refers to supporting the Correct Qi of the body, and strengthening the Qi of the organs in order to fight disease. This is based on the belief that the body has the ability to help itself heal and to expel pathogenic influences. Fu Zheng therapy also helps to improve the body's organs ability, particularly the kidneys and liver, to detoxify and eliminate pathogens and toxins, such as the drugs used in chemotherapy. When combined with conventional cancer treatments, Fu Zheng therapy helps the conventional treatments work more effectively.

Acupuncture can help cancer patients in the following ways:

- o Relieves nausea and vomiting.
- o Boosts immunity thereby reducing risk of secondary infections such as colds, flu, shingles, etc.
- o Increases red blood cells and platelets, both of which are decreased with chemotherapy, thus helping with anemia and fatigue, and allowing patients to tolerate conventional treatments better.
- o Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression.
- o Relieves pain and neuropathy, which are a common side effect of chemo and radiation.
- o Improves overall health and well being.

Cancer is not a death sentence. Educating ourselves about what options are available for treatment and overall healing can only improve our chances to live a healthier and happier life. While conventional medicine has its place, a more pronounced shift towards prevention, treating the whole person, and allowing an individual's natural healing abilities to take part in the healing process, is necessary if we truly want to promote health. This is where the integration of eastern with western medicine can truly make a difference.

To your continued good health,

David Mortell,
Registered Acupuncturist
www.pittsburghacupuncturecenter.com
412 363 0886