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Enhance your Endocrine Health with Acupuncture

The endocrine system is responsible for hormonal functions in the body and produces 30 distinct hormones, each of which has a very specific job to do. This system controls your physical growth, mood, hormone output, reproductive system, mental function and immune system. When it's not working properly, you become more susceptible to disease and your ability to fight off infection is weakened. Endocrine glands and how they function impact every area of your health.



The keystone of acupuncture and Oriental medicine has always been awakening the body's natural intelligence to heal itself and restore balance to the system of energy pathways (called "meridians") in the body. If the meridians within your body have become depleted, you can suffer from fatigue, infertility, weight gain, depression, digestive problems, hair loss, arthritis and feeling chilled no matter the temperature.

What are the endocrine glands and what do they do?

The major endocrine glands include the adrenals, pancreas, pineal, pituitary, reproductive and thyroid glands.

Adrenals - Adrenal glands regulate the body's response to stress and are made of two parts, each of which secretes a separate set of hormones. The outer part produces corticosteroid hormones that regulate the balance of salt and water, stress response, metabolism, immune function, as well as the development and function of the reproductive system. The inner part secretes adrenaline hormones that increase blood pressure and heart rate in response to stress. Over time, chronic elevated stress levels can lead to weight gain, decreased resistance to infections, fatigue, muscle aches and low blood sugar.

Pancreas - The pancreas produces insulin and glucagon, two hormones that work together to provide the body's cells with a constant supply of energy in the form of glucose.

Pineal - The pineal gland is also known as the epiphysis cerebri, epiphysis, or the "third eye." It produces the serotonin derivative melatonin, a hormone that affects the modulation of wake/sleep patterns and seasonal functions.

Hypothalamus and Pituitary - These are a collection of specialized cells that provide the primary link between the endocrine and central nervous systems. Nerve cells and hormones signal the pituitary gland to secrete or suppress the release of various hormone messages to the other glands. The pituitary gland is also responsible for secreting growth hormones.

Reproductive - These glands secrete hormones that control the development of male and female characteristics. In males, these glands secrete androgen hormones, most importantly testosterone. In females, they produce estrogen, progesterone, eggs, and are involved in reproductive functions.

Thyroid - Thyroid hormones control the growth, temperature and function of every cell in the body. The gland acts as the metabolic engine of the body -- if it secretes too little hormone, the body slows and dies; if it secretes too much, the body burns out and dies.

When treating a suspected endocrine condition with acupuncture and Oriental medicine, the practitioner seeks the root cause of the patient's imbalance. The endocrine system is closely tied to the internal balance of the Yin energy and the Yang energy. Imagine that the Yang energy is like gasoline that fuels a car, and Yin energy is the engine coolant. Without the coolant, the engine overheats and burns out. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine work to make sure the Yin and Yang are equal within the body to restore balance.

The root of the body's energy in Oriental medicine is the kidney meridian, so strengthening that meridian also restores nourishment to your endocrine glands. Acupuncture can be used to restore hormonal balance, regulate energy levels, smooth emotions, and help manage sleep and menstrual problems.

Many patients benefit from an integrated Eastern and Western medical approach to endocrine health. The strong point of Western medicine is intervention in life-threatening illness, whereas the strong point of Eastern medicine is increased quality of life. Therefore, it is optimal to have both Eastern and Western medicine options available for the most comprehensive care.

A healthy endocrine system that continues to secrete adequate amounts of hormones will slow the aging process and keep you vibrant and healthy as you age.

Come in for a consultation to see how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can assist you with your endocrine health and help you live a long, healthy life!

Acupuncture Benefits Sufferers of Exophthalmos

A 2011 PubMed study reviewing the effects of acupuncture and acupoint massage to treat infiltrative exophthalmos yielded positive results. The trial, entitled "Efficacy observation on infiltrative exophthalmos treated with acupuncture and acupoint massage," demonstrated the difference between using Oriental medicine versus western drug therapy.

Infiltrative exophthalmos is a medical condition which causes the eyeballs to bulge out of the sockets, giving the appearance of a 'bug-eyed' look. The cause is often, but not limited to, a form of hyperthyroidism, a state of inflammation and overproduction in the thyroid gland.

Researchers divided patients into two groups, a treatment one which received acupuncture at points near the eyes and massage therapy on the face and back of the neck. The control group patients received a strictly western drug treatment consisting of various pharmacological drugs.

To measure the effectiveness of treatment in both groups, researchers measured the extent of the exophthalmos in each patient at the beginning and conclusion of their respective treatments. At the conclusion of the trial, researchers noted a statistically significant improvement in the condition of the treatment group. The combined use of acupuncture and massage to address infiltrative exophthalmos proved superior to the use of pharmaceutical drug therapy alone.

The ocular examinations showed the treatment group benefited from their therapy by showing an outstanding 83.3 percent improvement, compared to the control group who exhibited a 58.8 percent improvement in their condition. In addition, researchers also noted that the use of acupuncture and massage was safe and free of harmful side effects.

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Exercises for Detoxification

In order for the endocrine system to function at optimum levels, the process of detoxification must occur. Detoxification removes waste and potentially hazardous material from the body. Waste can be eliminated by different means, including through urine, tears, sweat, and feces. When the body is able to properly detox, the thyroid greatly benefits. Whether you have symptoms relating to thyroid issues, or simply wish to be proactive and help prevent problems, here are a few detoxifying exercises you can perform.

According to the theory of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, the spleen plays a vital role in removing waste products from the body. An efficient spleen will therefore help optimize the thyroid's function of producing and releasing hormones. When food and drink are ingested, it is the spleen's duty to separate the clear from the turbid. The clear, which contains valuable nutrients, is sent on to be utilized by other organs. The turbid, useless or possibly harmful matter, descends to the large intestine where it is prepared for elimination.

To help invigorate your spleen, spending short amounts of time upside-down can help reverse the effects of gravity. If doing a head or hand stand for two to three minutes is not your thing, there are two alternatives: one is to lay face down on the floor, bend your elbows, and rest your chin in your hands so your head is positioned above the trunk of your body. Next, bend your knees and start swinging your feet back and forth. You may remember doing this one when you were a child. This can be done for as long as it is comfortable for you.

The next exercise involves lying on the ground with your backside down. Raise your legs in the air and rest them against the wall. Relax comfortably into the pose for up to five minutes. You can keep your arms extended to your sides on the floor. If you like, you can raise your arms in the air for 30-40 seconds, and then rest them.

These upside-down exercises can assist in releasing stuck food, gases or other matter that remain trapped somewhere in your digestive system. Removing these obstacles helps improve the blood flow to and from all the organs.

One quick way to help jog your sluggish system is to literally jog in place. Even 30 seconds of doing this will stimulate your system. Or, you could try jumping up and down five times in quick succession.

The best time to perform these exercises is before eating or at least two hours after a meal.

5 Nutrients to Support Your Endocrine Health

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein are part of any healthy diet. To directly affect your endocrine system, make sure your diet includes these foods:

Fish - Fish provides your body with Omega-3, Omega-6 and Omega-9 oils. These oils are fats that directly affect cognitive function, cellular function and kidney function--all the things under the control of the endocrine system.

Eating fish twice a week will aid in keeping a balanced endocrine system.

Garlic - Garlic boosts your immunity, which increases your ability to fight off infection. It also helps regulate blood sugar levels. One or two cloves of garlic a day is recommended. Include it in your cooking! Calcium -



Calcium keeps nerves healthy and ensures their ability to communicate effectively. Milk, cottage cheese, cheese, leafy greens, dried beans and yogurt are all rich in calcium.

Vitamin B and B Complex - These vitamins directly influence the nervous system's proper functioning and health, as well as one's physical and mental performance concerning the nervous system. Vitamin B and B complex are found in chicken, fish, eggs, whole grains, beans and nuts.

Vitamin C - Adrenal glands have a very high content of ascorbic acid (vitamin C). This vitamin helps the adrenal glands produce more of the disease-fighting hormone cortin.

A continued stressful environment depletes vitamin C reserves and increases the tendency for infection and disease. Good sources of vitamin C include citrus fruits, melons, apricots, strawberries, berries, green vegetables, sweet peppers and tomatoes

Cultivate Optimal Endocrine Health

The endocrine system regulates the body through hormonal secretions. Cultivating your endocrine health, combined with proper nutrition and diet, can boost energy, improve appetite, reduce insomnia, relieve depression symptoms, improve circulation, relieve muscle aches and assist you in recovering from endocrine disorders.

An easy way to improve the health of your endocrine system is to eat nutritious meals and maintain a well-balanced diet.

A few basic steps you can take to enhance your endocrine health are:

Eat Slowly - Don't rush through your meals. Allowing your body to properly digest food reduces after-meal fatigue, boosts your immune system and enables your endocrine system to properly process nutritional intake.

Exercise - Regular exercise boosts the immune system, improves cardiovascular health and muscle mass, and prevents bone loss. Stress-reducing exercises such as yoga, Qigong, or Tai Chi can also be beneficial.

Manage Your Stress - An important part of maintaining a healthy endocrine system is stress management. Stress can cause the overproduction of hormones, leading to the malfunction of endocrine organs.

Rest - Take a day out of the week for rest and rejuvenation, allowing your mind and body to recover.

Sleep - Get 6-8 hours of sleep per night in order to reduce stress and keep hormones balanced. Stress and a lack of sleep may cause some of the glands to malfunction.
