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Allergic Rhinitis? Try Acupuncture for Relief!

For many sufferers of allergic rhinitis, there's no need to hear a news report detailing the pollen count outside, as their runny nose, sneezing and itchy eyes will let them know. Often these symptoms strike in the summer and spring, but some patients also have symptoms due to an allergy to dust, mites or dander, to name a few. This condition is more commonly referred to as hay fever, seasonal allergies, or just plain allergies.



Symptoms typically include sneezing, runny nose, postnasal drip, and irritated eyes, ears, nose and throat. Normally, when a healthy body comes into contact with foreign particles in the air (allergens), the immune system initiates a response to neatly and harmlessly dispose of the allergens—not so for sufferers of hay fever. In their case, the immune system becomes hyperactive and destructive to the body, causing the symptoms of allergic rhinitis.

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine recognize allergic rhinitis as a condition that is provoked by external factors, although it generally occurs because the body already has a pre-existing deficiency. For example, some patients with a long-standing lung Qi deficiency are more susceptible to dust, dander, pollen, etc. in the air.

The Qi circulating in the lungs and its corresponding meridians is called lung Qi. When lung Qi is not strong, problems with breathing, coughing and general immunity may arise because the lungs are related to defensive Qi. As the name implies, this Qi functions in the same capacity as the immune system.

The nose is the sense organ corresponding to the lungs, so when there are blockages in the lung meridian, the nose also may be obstructed. Emotions associated with the lungs are grief and sadness. Sometimes after crying or an attack of allergic rhinitis, one may experience a stuffy nose, red eyes and irregular breathing, which reflects the strain on the lungs. A good way to counter these symptoms is to concentrate on deep, regular breaths which can help stabilize the emotions as well. In general, aerobic exercise is an excellent way to strengthen lung Qi, which in turn helps strengthen general immunity.

Acupuncture treatments may be used year-round, even if your allergies only occur in certain seasons or in the presence of certain allergens. When your allergy symptoms are not active any underlying deficiency you may have can be addressed.

If you have allergies, call today to see what acupuncture and Chinese medicine can do for you!



Chinese Medicine for Asthma Relief

Asthma is a chronic disease that causes inflammation in the lungs and, consequently, a narrowing of the bronchial tubes--also known as the air passages. This makes breathing difficult as airflow is restricted. Tell-tale signs of asthma include wheezing, shortness of breath, coughing, and a feeling of tightness in the chest. Some substances and conditions may cause or worsen the symptoms of asthma including physical activity, cold air, smoke, emotional distress or airborne allergens.

Conventional medical treatment offers a variety of pharmaceutical drugs, which are specific to the patient's triggers and symptoms of asthma. If you suffer from asthma, additional treatment from your acupuncturist and Chinese medicine practitioner in addition to conventional medical treatment may prove to be a winning combination.

A study called "Immunomodulatory Effects of Acupuncture in the Treatment of Allergic Asthma: A Randomized Controlled Study", published in 2007 in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, demonstrates the role acupuncture and Chinese medicine can have in the treatment of asthma symptoms. At the end of the study, it was shown that 79 percent of the study group felt an improvement in their general well-being. Significant improvements in the immune system were detected from the blood samples collected by the study group as well. The authors of the study were able to conclude that acupuncture, in conjunction with standard treatment, provides outstanding improvements to the immune system.

There are a few things one can do at home to help lessen the severity of asthma symptoms. According to acupuncture and Chinese medicine, the environment plays an important role in the health of an individual. For example, if one lives in a cold, damp environment, it may prove to be problematic. Not only may the cold contribute to constriction of the bronchial tubes, but the damp air may foster mold or other airborne pollutants that can irritate the air passages as well.

While it may not be possible to move to another climate, it is possible to focus on removing dust, animal dander, and other pollutants from your home. If your home is damp, consider using a dehumidifier, as this will help in eliminating mold. Sometimes breathing in cold air can cause wheezing and trouble breathing, so covering your mouth and nose in an effort to warm your breath may be helpful.

For soothing relief on a cold day, try a nourishing, warm soup. Keep the ingredients simple, the less processed and refined your food is, the easier it is on your digestive system. According to acupuncture and Chinese medicine, phlegm is produced in the stomach, but stored in the lungs. This is a direct reference to the importance of eating well and avoiding phlegm-producing foods.

Maintaining a healthy weight and exercising every day will help strengthen your immune system as well. If you are finding it difficult to lose weight and lack motivation to exercise, this is something your practitioner of acupuncture and Chinese medicine can assist you with. If an addiction to smoking is contributing to your symptoms of asthma, there are treatment protocols to help reduce cravings for nicotine and other substances.

Acupuncture Provides Allergic Rhinitis Relief

The American Journal of Epidemiology published a study that showed that acupuncture can significantly relieve allergic rhinitis symptoms.

In this German study, 5,237 men and women were analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of acupuncture in addition to routine care in patients with allergic rhinitis, compared to treatment with routine care alone.

In this trial, patients with allergic rhinitis were randomly allocated to receive acupuncture for a three month period or to a control group that received no acupuncture. All patients were allowed to receive routine medical care. The Rhinitis Quality of Life Questionnaire (RQLQ) and general health-related quality of life

(36-Item Short-Form Health Survey) were evaluated at baseline and after three and six months.

Improvements were noted at the three- and six-month evaluations for the patients receiving acupuncture. The authors of this trial concluded that treating patients with allergic rhinitis in routine care with additional acupuncture leads to clinically relevant and persistent benefits.

Source: *European Journal of Integrative Medicine*. 2008 Nov;101(5):535-43.

Study Shows Reduced Seasonal Allergy Symptoms

A study "The Effects of Acupuncture on Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis," published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* in February of 2013, brings encouraging news for sufferers of seasonal allergies.

Researchers set out to determine if acupuncture treatments plus the use of antihistamine drugs could significantly reduce symptoms of seasonal allergic rhinitis. 46 physicians from 6 hospitals and 32 outpatient medical clinics contributed to the large-scale trial.

All of the study participants tested positive for allergies to birch and grass pollen. Their symptoms included nasal blockages and runny noses. An evaluation occurred at 8 weeks, after the patients underwent 12 sessions of treatment each.

Patients who received real acupuncture treatments experienced a statistically important reduction in their symptoms of seasonal allergic rhinitis when compared to the sham acupuncture and histamine-only groups. Additionally, the real acupuncture group also witnessed a reduction in the need for antihistamines to manage their symptoms.

Source: *M. Ortiz, C.M. Witt, S. Roll, K. Linde, F. Pfab, B. Niggemann, J. Hummelsberger, A. Treszl, J. Ring, T. Zuberbier, K. Wegscheider, and S.N. Willich. The Effects of Acupuncture on Seasonal Allergic Rhinitis. (2013). Annals of Internal Medicine, 158(4), 1. <https://doi.org/10.73260003-4819-158-4-201302190-00001>.*

Small Study Finds Reduction in Adult Bronchial Asthma Symptoms

To study the effects of acupuncture for the treatment of adult bronchial asthma, researchers conducted a clinical trial in 2009 called "Effects of Acupuncture Treatment in Patients with Bronchial Asthma."

The results appeared in the journal *Japanese Acupuncture and Moxibustion*. The trial demonstrated that acupuncture is an effective and safe therapy to help reduce the symptoms of adult bronchial asthma, which causes inflammation of the airways, wheezing and dyspnea (labored breathing).

During the study, participants with mild to severe bronchial asthma received one acupuncture treatment per week for a total of 10 weeks. The number of asthma attacks and the unpleasant sensations of dyspnea, were recorded before and after treatments. Each patient's level of difficulty breathing, whether on the inhalation or exhalation, was reported subjectively.

Researchers reported that acupuncture treatments significantly alleviated the patients' dyspnea, and there was a major decline in their number of asthma attacks. There were no negative side effects resulting from treatment.

Source: *Suzuki, M., Namura, K., Egawa, M., & Yano, T. (2006). Effect of Acupuncture Treatment in Patients with Bronchial Asthma. Zen Nihon Shinkyu Gakkai Zasshi (Journal of the Japan Society of Acupuncture and*

Moxibustion), 56(4), 616–627. <https://doi.org/10.3777/jjsam.56.616> and <https://ssl.jtam.jp/onlineJournal/pdf2/39.pdf>.
