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## Treatment of Skin Conditions with Acupuncture

The skin reacts to imbalances within the body's internal landscape and to the effects of the environment. Your skin is a reflection of those internal disharmonies and environmental influences. Strong emotions, diet, anatomy, wind, dryness, dampness, and heat can all contribute to the development of a skin disorder.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can quickly alleviate acute symptoms and provides significant, lasting relief from chronic skin conditions such as acne, dermatitis, eczema, pruritus, psoriasis, rosacea, shingles and urticaria (hives).



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 and blood and lymph circulation improves the skin's complexion and appearance. This output triggers collagen production, which increases muscle tone and elasticity, thus helping to firm the skin. Stimulating circulation also nourishes the skin and encourages it to be moister, softer, smoother, and more lustrous.

Oriental medicine treats specific symptoms that are unique to each individual by using acupuncture, herbal medicine, bodywork, energetic exercises, lifestyle and nutrition recommendations to restore imbalances found in the body.

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

## Study Shows Acupuncture Effective for Skin Conditions

According to a large-scale analysis carried out by medical researchers, acupuncture is an effective primary treatment for a variety of dermatological conditions. As reported in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine in 2015, evidence compiled from 24 different scientific studies, underwent a thorough investigation.

Researchers evaluated scientific studies that examined the efficacy of acupuncture as a treatment for ectopic dermatitis (eczema), pruritus (intense itching), urticaria (hives), acne, neurodermatitis (chronic, severe itching), chloasma (rashes due to pregnancy), and facial elasticity.

Out of the 24 studies, 17 showed acupuncture significantly reduced flare-ups, improved symptoms, and provided greater clearance of skin lesions and wheals (red, raised, itchy patches of skin). Researchers

recommend further studies to fully understand the mechanisms of acupuncture that produce these results.

*Source: Ma C, Sivamani RK. Acupuncture as a Treatment Modality in Dermatology: A Systematic Review. J Altern Complement Med. 2015 Sep;21(9):520-9. doi: 10.1089/acm.2014.0274. Epub 2015 Jun 26.*

## **Troubling Acne? Try Acupuncture!**

Since 85 percent of all adolescents suffer from an acne condition, many of us believe it is a problem that only teenagers experience. However, the American Academy of Dermatology reports that 20 percent of adults also have active acne and we see that age plays less of a factor.

Acne often occurs when the hair follicles or pores become clogged from oil, dirt, dead skin cells, bacteria, environmental toxins or physical irritations on the surface of the skin. Hair follicles are connected to sebaceous glands that secrete an oily substance known as sebum. Ordinarily, the secretion of sebum provides a luscious, healthy sheen to hair and skin. But there are times when the substance builds up, causing the pores to become plugged.

For some, acne may just simply be a nuisance from time to time; for others, the problem is chronic. Not only do they suffer from frequent acne breakouts, but also acne scarring. What's more, only as little as 11 percent of the 60 million Americans struggling with acne will seek professional treatment.

If you are showing symptoms of acne, even if it's not chronic and severe, you may want to consider acupuncture. In addition to directly treating your skin condition through a personalized treatment plan, you can receive treatment for any underlying issues. By seeking treatment earlier rather than later, you may even be able to reduce the incidence of permanent scarring.

Generally, acupuncture and Oriental medicine view acne as heat and damp conditions. If the skin presents as red, swollen or painful, this is considered a heat condition. If the acne presents as a tender, pus-filled lump, it may be treated as a damp or damp-heat condition.

A few things you can do to get symptom relief at home include avoiding the temptation to pick at your acne as this can irritate the condition further and increase your chances of scarring. Use of a non-oily cleanser twice a day on the afflicted area and rinsing your skin with lukewarm green tea--brewed in the same way as if you were going to drink it--may help minimize the presence of oil and bacteria found on your skin.

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## **Minimize the Effects of Age on Your Skin**

Someone a long time ago once said time and tide wait for no man. This maxim expresses a truth that, under no circumstances, can time or aging reverse itself. But they never said some assistance wouldn't work.

Cosmetic facial acupuncture can play a key role in minimizing the signs of aging. There may be laugh lines around your eyes from all the girlfriends who made you chuckle, vertical lines near your eyebrows from years of concentrating or frustration, horizontal lines across your forehead from all the surprises and feelings of awe you've experienced, or sagging jowls with deep lines that reveal your times of sadness or concern.

Less invasive and virtually side-effect-free, this beauty treatment reduces wrinkles, dryness, undereye bags, sinking jowls, and lackluster skin. Acupuncture needles are placed at specific sites directly on the face. The needles rally Qi (energy) and blood to help repair damaged skin by activating the body's ability to produce collagen and elastin.

Collagen is a protein found in many types of body cells and is essentially the glue that binds things together. It is famous in the cosmetic world for its ability to promote vital, vibrant skin. Elastin is a substance located in connective tissue that helps tissue rebound and keep its shape after being poked, prodded or stretched.

To address fine lines and wrinkles on the face, a technique called 'threading' may come in handy. The process calls for applying small, hair-thin acupuncture needles all along the length of the wrinkle. This invigorates the area with fresh blood and Qi to help plump out and fill in the furrows.

Sometimes dark, puffy circles persist under the eyes, resembling bags. There are acupuncture points near the eye that can assist in reducing fluid retention and stagnation. One of the points is called Tear Container, and it is located right under the eyeball. When this point is activated, it relieves dark bags, alleviates red, itchy eyes and improves blurry vision.

While undergoing facial treatment, you could also wind up with acupuncture needles in other parts of your body. For instance, there is a point near the thumb, called Union Valley, that strongly activates Qi so it can quickly reach the areas of your body that require healing.

Complement therapy with small lifestyle changes and a diet rich in collagen and elastin-producing foods. Remember to eat lots of veggies that have a red, orange or dark green color to them. Then think white, as in white tea. This variety of tea is the least processed and contains high levels of antioxidants, giving it a special talent to fight the free radicals that destroy healthy, vibrant skin. The more free radicals eliminated, the better your skin will be.

Don't forget to protect your skin if you're going to be in direct sunlight for more than 20 minutes. Enlist the help of a wide-brimmed hat to keep your face in the shade.

*Sources:*

*Facial Acupuncture: Natural Age-Defying. Pacific College of Oriental Medicine. Retrieved from <https://www.pacificcollege.edu/news/blog/2015/04/12/facial-acupuncture-natural-age-defying>*

*Mcallister, J. (2018). Food That Builds Collagen & Elastin After Age 50. Livestrong. Retrieved from <https://www.livestrong.com/article/485132-foods-that-build-collagen-elastin-after-age-50/>*

**Contact us today to schedule an appointment or to learn more about acupuncture and Oriental medicine.**

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## **Foods to Help Your Skin Look Its Best**

Acupuncture views nutrition in a complex light. 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.

The goal is to find balance between the internal yin and yang of your body.

A healthy, nutritional diet, good sleep and moderate exercise can keep your skin and physical form at its best.

For healthy skin, be sure to integrate these foods into your diet:

Carrots and Sweet Potatoes: Healthy skin is directly dependent on the amount of vitamin A in our diet.

**Vitamin A** acts as an antioxidant to neutralize harmful elements in our skin, helping to prevent wrinkles, resist infection and maintain the skin's elasticity.

Some of the best sources of Vitamin A are vegetables that are deep orange in color.

**Blackberries, Blueberries, Strawberries, and Plums:** In a study recently published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, these four fruits weighed in with the highest "total antioxidant capacity" of any food.

The antioxidants and other phytochemicals in these fruits can protect cells from damage and disintegration, thus guarding against premature aging.

**Salmon, Walnuts, Olive Oil, and Flax Seed:** Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are responsible for skin repair, moisture content, and overall elasticity.

The body cannot produce its own EFAs so they must be obtained through diet. Fish, walnuts, and flax seed oil are among the best sources for omega 3 fatty acids.

Eating good-quality olive oil helps keep skin lubricated and keeps it looking and feeling healthier overall. Which olive oils are the best for your skin? Those labeled "cold pressed," "expeller processed," or "extra virgin" are the least processed forms and contain higher levels of antioxidants.

**Brown Rice, Turkey, Tuna, and Brazil Nuts:** Selenium is a mineral responsible for tissue elasticity and healthy skin. It may also play an important role in preventing skin cancer.

Some recent studies are showing that skin damaged by the sun may suffer fewer consequences if selenium levels are high.

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

Green tea can be taken orally or applied to the skin to reduce damage from ultraviolet light according to a study published in the Archives of Dermatology.

**Water:** Hydration plays a key role in keeping skin cells healthy. It is essential to maintaining your skin's elasticity and suppleness.

Keeping cells hydrated also helps cells move nutrients in and toxins out, which helps keep your skin clean and clear.

