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## Effects of Acupuncture on Rheumatoid Arthritis

The therapeutic value of combining electro-stimulation with acupuncture for treating rheumatoid arthritis was proved in a 2011 study published in the Chinese Journal of Integrative Medicine called "Effect of electro-acupuncture (EA) on tumor necrosis factor- $\alpha$  (TNF- $\alpha$ ) and vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) in peripheral blood and joint synovia of patients with rheumatoid arthritis."

The study was to determine how electro-acupuncture (EA) can lower the levels of certain cells and proteins that affect the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. The study measured TNF- $\alpha$  cells, which contribute to inflammation, and VEGF proteins, which stimulate new blood vessel growth that increases the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

Researchers concluded that electro-acupuncture is a valuable therapy for reducing symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis by lowering VEGF and TNF- $\alpha$  levels. Out of 63 study participants, 32 patients in the treatment group received EA, while another 31 patients in the control group underwent acupuncture not specifically related to their condition. All patients received approximately 30 treatments in total. Although both groups experienced a drop in their TNF- $\alpha$  and VEGF levels, the treatment group showed a significant lowering of their VEGF levels.

**Source:** Ouyang, B., Gao, J., Che, J. et al. Effect of Electro-acupuncture on Tumor Necrosis Factor- $\alpha$  and Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor in Peripheral Blood and Joint Synovia of Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis Chinese Journal of Integrative Medicine (2011) 17: 505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11655-011-0783-2>

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## Meta Analysis Finds Acupuncture Effective for Rheumatoid Arthritis Symptom Relief

The medical journal *Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* published a study entitled "Clinical Efficacy of Acupuncture on Rheumatoid Arthritis and Associated Mechanisms: A Systemic Review," in April of 2018. This scientific review highlights the benefits of using acupuncture to address symptoms associated with rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Researchers reviewed several medical databases worldwide to find high-quality studies focusing on the efficacy of using acupuncture alone, or in combination with other treatments, for rheumatoid arthritis patients. In the end, 43 studies were deemed adequate for the meta-analysis.

Each of the individual studies used standardized medical tools to evaluate the effect of acupuncture on their patients. Tools used included the visual analog scale, pain disability index, TCM symptom scoring, 10-meter walk test, grip power test, American College of Rheumatology 20, quality of life questionnaire, health assessment questionnaire, Pittsburgh sleep quality index scale and the depression, anxiety and stress

scale.

Throughout the viable studies, researchers noticed the most frequent acupuncture point used was Stomach 36 followed by Gall Bladder 34, Large Intestine 4, Urinary Bladder 60, and Gall Bladder 39.

Researchers concluded that acupuncture is a safe, effective method to treat symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. It is especially useful in improving patient quality of life. Acupuncture is highly recommended as there are no toxic side effects. This is in sharp contrast to pharmaceutical treatments, which are known to provoke adverse reactions.

**Are you suffering from rheumatoid arthritis? Contact an acupuncturist today to schedule an appointment or to learn how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you!**

**Source:** Chou, P. C., & Chu, H. Y. (2018). Clinical Efficacy of Acupuncture on Rheumatoid Arthritis and Associated Mechanisms: A Systemic Review. *Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative medicine: eCAM*, 2018, 8596918. doi:10.1155/2018/8596918!

## Self Acupressure for Pain Relief

These simple and effective methods of acupressure can be safely used to alleviate chronic pain.

As always, when engaging in self-acupressure, find a comfortable position before beginning. Take a minute or two for focused deep breathing to ease into a peaceful state.

### Head Corner for Headache Relief

You can find the Head Corner point on your hairline, roughly in the area just above the end of your eyebrows. If there's not much hair to judge by, take your best guess. If you imagine your head as a square, the points are at the corners.

Apply gentle pressure in a circular motion with the pads of your three middle fingers. Gradually increase the pressure if needed.

In addition to alleviating headaches, rubbing here can soothe tired eyes and alleviate nausea.



### Welcome Fragrance to Open Sinuses

This point is nestled very close to the nose, at its base, just off to the sides. It is well-known for its ability to open up the sinuses.

Try experimenting here with your fingertips by delicately pulling the skin towards your ears, or in a slightly upward direction.

The free flow of air can help reduce chronic headaches induce a calming effect by allowing you to deep breathe through your nose.

### Union Valley to Move Qi

This point is located near the thumb and is a highly effective point when addressing any kind of pain.

To locate, put the thumb and first finger in a position where they are straight but touching each other. The fleshy mound between the two should be visible to the eye and easily located.

Apply steady, strong pressure with your opposite thumb, as you make tiny, circular motions.

### Commanding Middle Point for Back Pain

This point is conveniently located at the back of the knee, in the center, right where it bends. Use your thumbs to press with moderate to strong pressure.

Circular motions or directly pressing this area can help bring relief to chronic lower backache and the pain associated with osteoarthritis.

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

## Managing Your Arthritis Flareups

Most people are familiar with the term arthritis, which may conjure up images of twisted, knobby fingers or achy knees, but did you know there are over 100 different types of arthritis? Learn how acupuncture and Oriental Medicine can address the specific types of arthritis known to induce flare-ups, which are sudden escalations in the severity of symptoms.

Some arthritic conditions that are prone to flare-ups:

**Rheumatoid arthritis (RA)**--a chronic, autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks joint tissue. The synovial fluid that encases the joints thickens due to inflammation. This can cause pain and structural deformities. Other symptoms include fatigue and fever.

**Osteoarthritis (OA)**--also called degenerative joint disease. When cartilage, the protective cushioning found between the bones, starts eroding away, symptoms of OA may result. This can cause pain, visible swelling and difficulty moving the afflicted joint.

**Psoriatic arthritis**--a particular type of arthritis associated with the skin condition psoriasis. The most common symptoms include joint swelling, redness, and pain. Severe cases may result in misshapen joints.

Often the reason behind a flare-up is obvious. Dampness pervading the air before a rainstorm or overusing arthritic joints may trigger symptoms. Other times, the exact cause remains a mystery. However, no matter the origin of a flare-up, acupuncture and Oriental Medicine can help.

**To learn more about acupuncture and Oriental Medicine for managing your arthritis flare-ups, contact an acupuncturist near you today!**

## Study Shows Acupuncture Effective for Osteoarthritis Relief

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease that causes the cartilage, which cushions and protects the joints, to slowly erode away. This increases friction every time the joints are used, roughing up the cartilage, and could eventually lead to bone touching bone. The cartilage at the end of a healthy bone should not be quite as hard as bone and it should be less flexible than muscle, thus promoting nice, fluid movements at the joints. Areas of the body made up of cartilage include the nose, ears, and all of the joints. It is mainly the joints of the hands, knees, hips, and spine that are affected by osteoarthritis. The signs and symptoms that may occur at joints afflicted with osteoarthritis include the following:



- Joint pain and tenderness
- Stiffness, especially in the morning
- Loss of mobility and flexibility
- Crepitus--a crinkly sensation or a grating sound arising from movement of the joints
- Bone spurs--an outgrowth of tiny, bony slivers found along the edge of a bone

**The following list includes risk factors for osteoarthritis:**

- Advanced age
- Female gender
- Obesity
- Prior injuries
- Certain genetic bone deformities

There is no known cure for osteoarthritis, so standard Western medical treatment will often focus on managing symptoms with drug therapy--using certain NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) and other analgesics such as ibuprofen. However, these drugs provide only temporary relief from pain and may cause side effects such as stomach cramps, dizziness and, at worst, difficulty breathing. Fortunately, studies

reveal the ability of acupuncture and Oriental medicine can provide significant pain relief in those with osteoarthritis.

**Find an Acupuncturist near you to learn how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you!**

About the Author: Vanessa Vogel Batt, L.Ac., MSTOM, studied at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine and practiced acupuncture and Oriental medicine in New York for several years. Vanessa enjoys traveling the world and has published articles on acupuncture and Oriental medicine and related health topics for websites and publications in both the U.S. and abroad.

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