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Keep Your Skin Healthy with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be very effective at treating skin conditions. Treatments can provide quick relief for acute symptoms as well as significant and lasting relief from recurrent or chronic skin conditions.

The skin reflects and reacts to imbalances within the body's internal landscape and the effects of the environment. Internal disharmonies caused by strong emotions, diet, and your constitution can contribute to the development of a skin disorder. Environmental influences, such as wind, dryness, dampness, and heat can also trigger or exacerbate skin disorders.



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, blood and lymph circulation improves the skin's natural healthy color. Promotion of collagen production increases muscle tone and elasticity helping to firm the skin. Stimulating the formation of body fluids nourishes the skin, adding moisture and making it softer, smoother and more lustrous.

General skin conditions that can be treated with acupuncture and Oriental medicine include acne, dermatitis, eczema, pruritus, psoriasis, rosacea, shingles and urticaria (hives). Evidence that Acupuncture and herbal medicine have been used for skin disorders, such as hives, can be found in early medical literature dating back to 3 AD. Medicinal plants and stone needles were utilized to relieve and cure discomforts of the external areas of the body.

Oriental medicine does not recognize skin problems as one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques including acupuncture, herbal medicine, bodywork, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 10 patients are treated with Oriental medicine for eczema, each patient will receive a unique, customized treatment with different lifestyle and dietary recommendations.

Acupuncture views nutrition in a complex light, through the application of Oriental medicine wisdom to dietary habits. In short, 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. Overall, the goal is balance between the internal yin and yang of the body. A healthy, nutritional diet, good sleep and moderate exercise can keep your skin and physical form at its best.

If you suffer from a skin condition or would like to know how to optimize your skin health, call today to find out more about how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you.

Treating Hives with Acupuncture

Hives (urticaria) are swollen and red, bumps, patches or welts on the skin that appear suddenly. Itching is

the most common symptom associated with hives, although some people report that hives cause a stinging or burning sensation.

Hives can occur anywhere on the body including the hands, face, lips, tongue, throat, or ears. A sign that the whole body is experiencing a hypersensitivity reaction, a hives outbreak can occur due to a wide array of stimuli. While intolerance to certain foods, additives, intense emotions, sunlight exposure, and medications can all cause hives, in 70-75 percent of outbreaks the exact cause of hives remains unknown.

Whether lasting for just a few minutes, a few hours or persisting for several weeks, hives are rarely a medical emergency. However, in some cases they are the first sign of a strong allergic reaction to something and can be accompanied by shock or difficulty breathing, which can be life threatening. About 20 percent of people will experience hives (urticaria) at some point in their lives.

While standard treatment for acute cases of hives involves antihistamines or a corticosteroid drug to relieve symptoms, many people are turning to acupuncture and Oriental medicine to address underlying imbalances that cause this condition and help stop recurrent outbreaks.

In Oriental medicine, an outbreak of hives is described as *wind invading the skin and the meridians*, causing itching and swelling. When the eruptions are red, it is an indication that *wind* and *heat* are involved. When the eruptions are a pale pink or white, it is likely that the diagnosis will be *wind-cold invading the skin*. How the condition is diagnosed will determine what acupuncture points are used, what herbal medicines are prescribed and what lifestyle/dietary recommendations are made.

Treatments are directed at addressing both the cause and the symptoms by providing immediate relief from the itching and swelling and addressing the underlying imbalances and triggers that are causing the condition.

A study published in the Internet Journal of Dermatology examined the efficacy of acupuncture in the treatment of chronic hives (urticaria). The results showed that acupuncture was able to reduce both episode rate and episode duration of urticaria by as much as 25 percent. After three weeks the majority of the acupuncture treated patients experienced partial remission of their symptoms. The researchers also noted that the greatest improvements were seen in the third week of treatments and that the efficacy of acupuncture seemed to increase with each treatment.

Foods to Help You Look Your Best

Be sure to integrate these items into your diet to help keep you looking your best:

Vitamin A: Acting as an antioxidant to neutralize harmful elements in our skin, vitamin A helps to prevent wrinkles, resist infection and maintain the skin's elasticity. One of the best places to get vitamin A is from vegetables that are deep orange in color, such as carrots or sweet potatoes.



Blackberries, Blueberries, Strawberries, and Plums: Antioxidants and other phytochemicals in these fruits can protect cells from damage and disintegration, thus guarding against premature aging. In a study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, these four fruits weighed in with the highest "total antioxidant capacity" of any food.

Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs): Responsible for skin repair, moisture content, and flexibility, and because the body cannot produce its own, EFAs must be obtained from diet. Fish, walnuts, and flaxseed oil are great sources of omega 3 fatty acids.

Selenium: An antioxidant mineral responsible for tissue elasticity and healthy skin selenium can be found in brown rice, turkey, tuna and Brazil nuts

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

Water: Essential to maintaining your skin's elasticity and suppleness, hydration plays a key role in keeping skin cells healthy. Hydration helps cells move nutrients in and toxins out to keep skin clean and clear.
