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## Top Male Health Concerns and How Acupuncture Can Help

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine have been used to treat men's health concerns for thousands of years and are growing in popularity. The reason for this growth in popularity is that many health issues that men face, such as high blood pressure, prostate problems and depression, respond extremely well to acupuncture treatments.



### Primary health issues that affect men include:

#### Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease is the leading men's health threat, with heart disease and stroke topping the list of the first and second leading causes of death worldwide. By integrating acupuncture and Oriental medicine into a heart healthy lifestyle, you can dramatically reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Taking even small steps to improve your health can reduce your risk for cardiovascular disease by as much as 80 percent. Steps to prevention include managing high blood pressure, quitting smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, reducing stress and getting better sleep. All of these issues can be helped with acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

Acupuncture has been found to be particularly helpful in lowering blood pressure. By applying acupuncture needles at specific sites along the wrist, inside the forearm or in the leg, researchers have been able to stimulate the release of natural opioids in the body, which decreases the heart's activity and reduces its need for excess oxygen. This, in turn, lowers blood pressure.

A German study published in the June 2007 issue of *Circulation* found that acupuncture significantly lowers both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. The extent of the blood pressure reductions by acupuncture treatments was comparable to those seen with antihypertensive medication or aggressive lifestyle changes, including radical salt restrictions. By the end of the six weeks, 24-hour ambulatory systolic and diastolic blood pressures were significantly reduced from baseline in the acupuncture-treated patients while there were no significant changes seen in the sham acupuncture group.

#### Lung and Other Cancers

Acupuncture was shown to be effective in the treatment of cancer according to an encouraging 2011 study called "Acupuncture May Stimulate Anticancer Immunity via Activation of Natural Killer Cells." An acupuncture point in the lower leg called ST36 proved particularly useful by increasing the production of white blood cells. This action compelled the researchers to dub ST36 as the "immune-enhancing acupoint."

The study showed acupuncture can also mitigate side effects such as fatigue, pain and severe dry mouth which often accompany standard therapies. Making use of ear points to soothe fear can also be beneficial for men that have symptoms of cancer.

Lung cancer is the leading cancer killer in men. Tobacco smoke causes 90 percent of all lung cancer, so you

should make every effort to quit smoking for improved health and longevity. If you are ready to quit smoking, acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help.

Shown to be an effective treatment for smoking and other addictions, acupuncture and Oriental medicine treatments for these issues focus on jitters, cravings, irritability, and restlessness; symptoms that people commonly complain about when they try to quit. Treatments also aid in relaxation and detoxification.

In one study on substance addiction, a team from Yale University successfully used auricular (ear) acupuncture to treat cocaine addiction. Results showed that 55 percent of participants tested free of cocaine during the last week of treatment, compared to 24 percent and 9 percent in the two control groups. Those who completed acupuncture treatment also had longer periods of sustained abstinence compared to participants in the control groups.

### **Depression and Mental Health**

Men are four times more likely to commit suicide than women, reports the Men's Health Network, which attributes part of the problem to under-diagnosed depression in men. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 6 million men have depression each year in America alone. It is now believed that the male tendency to hide feelings of depression and to not seek professional help has skewed previously reported numbers. Depression in men does not present solely as extreme sadness. Depression in men may present as anger, aggression, burnout, risk-taking behavior, mid-life crisis or alcohol and substance abuse.

When people are suffering from depression, brain chemicals and stress hormones are out of balance. Sleep, appetite, and energy levels are all disturbed. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can alleviate symptoms associated with depression and mental health issues by helping to rebalance the body's internal systems.

The growing body of research supporting the positive effects of acupuncture on depression, anxiety, and insomnia is so strong that the military now uses acupuncture to treat troops with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and combat stress syndrome.

### **Prostate Health**

The prostate is prone to enlargement and inflammation as men age, affecting about half of men in their sixties and up to 90 percent of men in their seventies and eighties. If left untreated, benign prostate gland enlargement, which presents with symptoms such as frequent nighttime urination, painful urination, and difficult urination, can lead to more serious conditions such as prostate cancer, urinary tract infections, bladder or kidney damage, bladder stones, and incontinence.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be used to treat prostate problems to relieve the urinary symptoms and prevent more serious conditions from occurring. The few studies completed on acupuncture and prostatitis show positive results, with participants noticing a marked improvement in their quality of life, a decrease in urinary difficulties, and an increase in urinary function.

### **Reproductive Health**

While reproductive health concerns may not be life threatening, they can still signal significant health problems. Two-thirds of men older than seventy and up to 39 percent of men around the age of forty report having problems with their reproductive health. Oriental medicine can help treat various male disorders. As men age, a decrease in the function of male reproductive organs occurs and they experience andropause, or male menopause.

The decline of testosterone production gradually starts in the early thirties and continues through the mid-fifties. In contrast to menopause, which happens over a much shorter period of time, the signs of andropause creep up gradually, making an accurate diagnosis tricky.

Testosterone directly influences many bodily functions and organs, including the heart, prostate, muscles, blood sugar, fat metabolism, bone density, libido and mental cognition. Sudden mood changes like depression and anger may also result from andropause. Signs and symptoms of andropause can include loss of libido, enlarged prostate, weight gain, osteoporosis, sterility, urinary problems and infections, and digestive problems.

According to Culley C. Carson, M.D., of the Boston University School of Medicine, it is estimated that more

than 60 percent of men over age 65 have free testosterone levels below the normal values of men in the 30 to 35 age range. While the incremental loss of testosterone represents the natural life cycle in an aging, healthy male, more severe levels of decrease can prove detrimental.

Other male reproductive health conditions that acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help include premature ejaculation, low sperm count, diminished sperm motility, impotence, hernias, testicular pain, prostatitis, male infertility, and andropause.

**If you want to get a head start on addressing any health issues which may present a problem in the future, or already have a diagnosis of a serious illness, call for an appointment today!**

## Top 5 Nutrients to Boost Men's Health

Men have different nutritional requirements than women, due to their unique physiology. These are the five key nutrients for men's health to keep in mind when planning that next meal.



### Magnesium

Magnesium plays a key role in many important bodily functions, including the immune system, energy production, digestion and nerve and muscle activity. A man lacking in magnesium may experience painful muscle spasms and cramps, anxiety, lethargy, or an irregular heartbeat. To stave off these symptoms of magnesium deficiency, incorporate dark leafy vegetables, yogurt, bananas, black beans or almonds into your daily diet.

Another way your body can absorb magnesium is through a soothing foot bath or a soak in the tub with Epsom salt. The magnesium sulfate in Epsom salt will penetrate through the skin as you relax. A couple tablespoons are all that is required for a foot bath, and about a cup is recommended for the bathtub.

### Vitamin D

Vitamin D is sometimes referred to as the 'sunshine vitamin' because the skin produces it when it is exposed to sunlight. Vitamin D assists the body in absorbing calcium, which in turn contributes to strong teeth and bones. This nutrient also provides some protection against cancer. Foods high in Vitamin D include fatty fish, such as tuna or salmon, cheese, and mushrooms

### Vitamin B12

This versatile vitamin is responsible for red blood cell production, DNA production, bone health and maintaining the cardiovascular system. It is necessary for certain neurological functions and contributes to an overall sense of well-being. Foods high in Vitamin B12 include shellfish, red meat, cheese, eggs, yogurt and milk.

There are no plant-based options rich in B12, so those on a vegan diet may want to consider adding fortified cereals, nutritional yeast or supplements in order to reach their daily requirements of vitamin B12.

### Potassium

This nutrient serves many vital functions to keep the body healthy and strong. It delivers nourishment into the cells and removes toxins and waste products from them. Potassium also maintains the balance between the fluids and electrolytes in the body and is responsible for nerve health and muscle contraction. A lack of potassium can cause a host of symptoms including nausea, muscle cramping and heart palpitations. Potassium-rich foods include dark leafy greens, potatoes (with the skin on), squash, yogurt, bananas, white beans, and mushrooms.

### Iodine

Iodine is a trace mineral that helps convert food into energy. It also plays a significant role in thyroid health and has the job of producing thyroid hormones. Consuming inadequate amounts of iodine can cause memory problems, weight gain, muscle fatigue, persistent tiredness and feeling cold.

Foods with plenty of iodine in them include kelp, hiziki, kombu, yogurt, seafood (such as cod, sea bass and haddock), cheese, potatoes, navy beans, cranberries and strawberries.