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## Top Men's Health Concerns and How Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine 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.

### Lung 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 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 as they approach their seventies and eighties. If left untreated, benign prostate gland enlargement, which presents with symptoms such as frequent nighttime urination, painful or 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 by relieving related urinary symptoms and preventing the 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.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine are well known for improving male performance; in fact, there have been medical textbooks devoted to the subject. Chinese Emperors took their performance quite seriously and would consult with a team of physicians if they experienced any difficulties in the bedroom.

Acupuncture can be used for a variety of reproductive health concerns including low sperm count, diminished sperm motility, diminished libido and male menopause (also known as male climacteric or andropause).

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## **Acupuncture for Cholesterol Management**

Research has clearly shown that lowering cholesterol can reduce the risk of developing heart disease. Whether you have heart disease already or want to prevent it, you can reduce your risk of having a heart attack by lowering your cholesterol level.

The American Heart Association says it's important to pay attention to exercise, and a proper diet that is low on foods that contain cholesterol and saturated fats. That means eating better and improving lifestyle. Speak to your health care providers to make sure your cholesterol is being monitored and find out how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you stay healthy.

### **Herbal Medicine**

Several Chinese herbs and herbal formulas are used to lower cholesterol levels. Shan Zha (Fructus Crataegi) also known as Hawthorn berry, has been shown to reduce LDL cholesterol levels and lower blood pressure.

Most herbal medicines are a blend of herbs specifically chosen for each individual. Please talk to your practitioner about which herbal formulas and supplements for high cholesterol and heart health are right for you.

### **Causes of High Cholesterol**

Three nutrients in your diet make LDL ("bad" cholesterol) levels rise:

- Saturated fat, a type of fat found mostly in foods that come from animals
- Trans fat, found mostly in foods made with hydrogenated oils and fats such as stick margarine
- Cholesterol, which comes only from animal products

Learn how to read a food label - Choose foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol.

### **Overweight**

Excess weight tends to increase your LDL level. Also, it typically raises triglycerides, a fatty substance in the blood and in food and lowers HDL. Losing the extra pounds may help lower your LSL and triglycerides while raising your HDL.

### **Physical Inactivity**

Being physically inactive contributes to overweight and can raise LDL and lower HDL. Regular physical activity can raise HDL and lower triglycerides and can help you lose weight and, in that way, help lower your LDL. Participate in physical activity of moderate intensity—like brisk walking—for at least 30 minutes on most, and preferably all, days of the week. No time? Break the 30 minutes into three, 10-minute segments during the day.

### **Smoking**

Don't smoke. If you do smoke, contact your acupuncturist to help you quit.

### **Your Cholesterol Level**

You can have high cholesterol and not realize it. Most of the 65 million Americans with high cholesterol have no symptoms. So it's important to have your blood cholesterol levels checked. All adults age 20 and older should have their cholesterol levels checked at least once every 5 years. If you have elevated cholesterol, you'll need to have it tested more often.

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## **Foods Men Should Eat Every Day**

Adding nutrient-rich superfoods to the diet can give men a healthy boost.

Here are just a few foods that can help maintain muscle mass, prevent prostate cancer, and more.

### **Avocados**

Avocados are a good source of vitamin K, dietary fiber, vitamin B6, vitamin C, folate, and copper. Rich in potassium, avocados contain more of this nutrient than bananas. Potassium is needed to regulate nerves, heartbeat and, especially, blood pressure. An added bonus for men: Avocados inhibit the growth of prostate cancer cells.

### **Blackberries**

Blackberries are packed with Vitamin C, calcium, and magnesium, with more than double the amounts than their popular cousin, the blueberry. Vitamin C is a powerful stress reducer that can lower blood pressure and return cortisol levels to normal faster when taken during periods of stress. Magnesium and calcium act together to help regulate the nerves and muscle tone.

Too little magnesium in your diet can cause nerve cells to become over-activated and can trigger muscular tension, soreness, spasms, cramps, and fatigue. Blackberries also score high on the oxygen radical absorbance capacity (ORAC) scale assesses the antioxidant content of food: the higher the score, the better the food's ability to neutralize cell-damaging free radicals that lead to cancer.

### **Spinach**

Spinach is one of the most nutrient-dense foods in existence. Spinach can help protect against prostate cancer, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, lower blood pressure, and strengthen muscles.

### **Walnuts**

When it comes to their health benefits, walnuts are the king of nuts. Richer in heart-healthy omega-3s than salmon, loaded with more antioxidants than red wine, and packing half as much muscle-building protein as chicken, walnuts are one of the all-time superfoods.

### **Yogurt**

Eating yogurt that contains live bacterial cultures every day improves digestive health, boosts the immune system, provides protection against cancer and may help you live longer. Not all yogurts are probiotic though, so make sure the label says "live and active cultures forehead to neck, then reverse the order."

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## **Maintaining Prostate Health with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine**

The prostate gland is an important part of the male sexual reproduction system. It is located between the penis and the bladder and it surrounds the urethra. The urethra, part of both the urinary and reproductive system, provides the pathway for urine and seminal fluid to exit the body. Components of seminal fluid include sperm, and the fluid is secreted by the prostate gland during male ejaculation. The purpose of the fluid secreted by the prostate is to protect and nurture sperm as it is pushed through the urethra and out of the body.



The size of a healthy prostate is roughly the size of a walnut. However, over time, the vast majority of men over 40 years old will experience an enlargement of the gland. Some men may also begin to experience discomfort and symptoms manifesting in diseases such as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) or prostate cancer. Symptoms are largely due to the swelling exerting pressure on the urethra and bladder.

### **Symptoms include:**

- Nocturia (frequent night-time urination)
- Burning, painful urination
- Dysuria (difficult urination)
- Dribbling or incomplete urination
- Hematuria (blood in the urine)
- Urinary tract infection (UTI)
- Pain in the lower abdomen
- Pain on ejaculation

If you experience any of these symptoms, plus a fever, you may have an infection or traumatic injury of the prostate, requiring immediate medical attention. The cause may be a condition called prostatitis, which is inflammation of the prostate, and it can occur in young males as well. A fever is not always present in cases of prostatitis.

Although BPH and prostate cancer produce similar symptoms, their causes are different. BPH occurs due to naturally-occurring hormonal changes in a man's life and may never cause any problems. By the time the average male is 40, the prostate may be as large as an apricot; by 60, it might reach the size of a lemon.

Prostate cancer, on the other hand, is more mysterious. The exact cause is unknown, but there are known risk factors. These factors include aging, being of African American heritage, obesity and a family history of prostate or breast cancer. Prostate cancer is the most commonly occurring cancer in men.

If you experience any of these symptoms, or if you wish to learn more about maintaining good prostate health, consider seeing your acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioner. Very often, symptoms of some prostate diseases are diagnosed as a kidney deficiency.

According to the theory of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, the kidneys represent the foundation from which all of life exists. Kidney qi, the energy associated with the kidneys, is the gauge that determines the state of health for the whole body. For example, if kidney qi is deficient, this indicates that an imbalance exists, and this imbalance may require treatment from your acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioner.

It is natural for kidney qi to decline as we age. As a matter of fact, that is one way acupuncture and Oriental medicine describes the aging process. According to the theory, there are certain foods that help fortify kidney qi. This includes beef, root vegetables, bone marrow soups, seeds (especially black sesame), blueberries, blackberries and any bean that is shaped like a kidney, such as kidney or black beans. Foods that are especially helpful for men suffering symptoms of enlarged prostate are pumpkin, mushrooms and berries.

