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Strengthen Your Digestive Health with Acupuncture

More than 95 million Americans suffer from digestive disorders ranging from constipation, diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome to more serious conditions such as acid reflux (GERD), ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. In fact, more than 35 million physician office visits a year are due to gastrointestinal complaints. Reports confirm that acupuncture and Oriental medicine can offer relief from even the most complex digestive problems.



Diagnosis and Treatment of Digestive Disorders

Evidence that Oriental medicine has been used for digestive disorders can be found in early medical literature dating back to 3 AD, where specific acupuncture points and herbal formulas for borborygmus (rumbling or gurgling in the intestines), abdominal pain and diarrhea with pain are discussed.

According to Oriental medical theory, most digestive disorders are due to disharmony in the spleen and stomach. The spleen plays a central part in the health and vitality of the body, taking a lead role in the assimilation of nutrients and maintenance of physical strength. It turns digested food from the stomach into usable nutrients and Qi (energy). Many schools of thought have been formed around this organ; the premise being that the proper functioning of the "middle" is the key to all aspects of vitality.

By taking into account a person's constitution and varied symptoms, a treatment plan is designed specifically for the individual to bring their "middle" back into harmony and optimize the proper functioning of the digestive system. A variety of techniques can be used during treatment including acupuncture, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore digestive health.

Is your digestive system functioning as well as it could? Acupuncture and Oriental medicine are extremely effective at treating a wide array of digestive disorders. Call today for more information or to schedule an appointment!

Relief for Ulcerative Colitis

Ulcerative colitis is part of a category of diseases called inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), and it presents with inflammation in the lining of the large intestine, specifically the colon and sometimes the rectum. The lining becomes inflamed due to small wounds or ulcers, which then produce mucus and pus.

To be more specific, the condition occurs when the body mistakenly identifies food or other substances as foreign invaders. White blood cells are called up as part of an immune response, which proceed to cause inflammation and damage in the large intestine. Flare-ups may be triggered by stress, infections and certain anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin or ibuprofen. However, the exact cause of ulcerative colitis is not known, but medical researchers suspect a link between a person's genetics, general state of the immune system and environmental factors.

Most people start showing symptoms in their 30's since the disease advances slowly over time, and men and women are equally as likely to be affected. Children are also at risk and, in general, the younger a child

is the more likely the symptoms and complications will be severe. Growth and mental development may be a problem in this case.

As there can be weeks or even months without a patient experiencing symptoms, when they do occur, they are referred to as flare-ups. The inflammation and ulceration associated with ulcerative colitis can cause pain and different problems, including frequent, watery diarrhea, persistent diarrhea with pain and bloody stool, urgent bowel movements, incomplete evacuation of the bowels despite a feeling of urgency, abdominal cramping, loss of appetite, weight loss, body fluid depletion, fatigue, fever or urgent diarrhea that wakes you up in the middle of the night.

The symptoms and how long they occur for can vary widely for each patient. Many sufferers report only minimal or moderate symptoms, while others experience life-threatening complications such as severe dehydration and major bleeding from the colon.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine is equipped to handle the symptoms of ulcerative colitis as demonstrated by a meta-analysis of different scientific studies conducted since the 1990's. A team of researchers conducted a wide-scale analysis of 43 randomized, controlled trials investigating the efficacy of acupuncture and moxibustion for the treatment of irritable bowel disease. Of those 43 trials, 42 specifically analyzed and addressed ulcerative colitis.

Researchers then focused on 10 scientific studies that compared the use of acupuncture and moxibustion to the use of oral sulphasalazine for symptom relief. Sulphasalazine is a doctor-prescribed pharmaceutical drug that is commonly used in the treatment of ulcerative colitis and rheumatoid arthritis. After analyzing the studies, researchers concluded "acupuncture and moxibustion demonstrated better overall efficacy than oral sulphasalazine in treating inflammatory bowel disease." This meta-analysis was performed by a team at the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Shanghai, China. The study was published in the 2013 issue of *Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, a peer-reviewed medical journal covering alternative medicine.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and Acupuncture

A common disorder affecting 10 to 20 percent of adults at some point in their lives, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) was once called "spastic colon" and has a combination of symptoms that may include constipation, diarrhea, gas, bloating, fatigue and headaches that can be worsened by certain foods, stress and other irritants. IBS results from nervous interference with the normal function of the lower digestive tract. The symptoms are variable and change over time.

While other patterns may be present, IBS is typically considered a disharmony between the liver and the spleen meridians in Oriental medicine. The liver meridian is responsible for the smooth flow of Qi and blood throughout the body. This flow can be upset by emotions or stress, causing stagnation of Qi or blood. Oriental medicine views the spleen meridian as being associated with the function of digestion and transforming food into energy (Qi and blood). This can be weakened by a number of factors including overeating unhealthy foods, overwork, stress, fatigue, and lack of exercise. When the spleen meridian is weak and the liver meridian is not moving smoothly, the liver overacts on the spleen and can manifest as symptoms of IBS. Symptoms can be managed by avoiding overeating, exercise, identifying trigger foods and reducing stress.

Do you suffer from Irritable Bowel Syndrome? Call today to see how Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can improve your quality of life!

Crohn's Disease Symptom Relief

Crohn's disease is a medical condition that can cause chronic inflammation anywhere in the gastrointestinal tract--from the mouth all the way to the rectum. Often, but not always, the inflamed tissue is specifically found in the ileum (the end of the small intestine) and the beginning of the colon. Inflammation can spread into the deeper layers of the tract and frequently has what is known as a "cobblestone appearance." This refers to the fact that some patches of diseased tissue are found next to patches of healthy tissue.

Although all age groups are equally at risk, people 15-35 years old are most commonly affected. Crohn's is a difficult condition to cure, so the main focus of treatment is to help manage symptoms with medication and dietary changes and, in some cases, surgery to repair or remove affected areas of the gastrointestinal tract. Because the disease is chronic, the individual may experience periods of flare-ups and aggravating symptoms, while at other times the person will have periods with no apparent symptoms at all.

Symptoms vary from patient to patient, and may include persistent, recurrent diarrhea, bleeding from the anus, urgent need to evacuate the bowels, constipation or feeling of incomplete evacuation, abdominal cramping, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, weight loss, fatigue, mental and physical developmental delays (in certain cases occurring amongst children), fever, night sweats, or irregular menstrual cycle

It is important to receive an early diagnosis as untreated Crohn's disease can eventually cause life-threatening symptoms such as tears in the lining of the rectum and fistulas. Fissures can cause excess bleeding and pain. Fistulas happen when inflammation erodes tissue, causing the formation of a tunnel starting from the intestines, going to the urinary bladder, vagina or even the skin.

A study called Acupuncture Helps Crohn's Disease Patients was published in the journal *World of Gastroenterology*, and it had some very promising results. It concluded that "acupuncture provided significant therapeutic benefits in patients with active Crohn's disease, beyond the placebo effect and is therefore an effective and safe treatment." Even more encouraging, researchers also discovered that both lab scores and quality of life scores improved. This means that acupuncture and Oriental medicine is adept at handling the physical and emotional symptoms that often accompany the disease.

For the study, the acupuncture points selected for treatment focused on reducing inflammation in the intestinal tract. Each participant received three treatments per week for a total of 12 weeks. Additionally, moxibustion (moxa) was also used on four acupuncture points on the stomach. Moxa is a traditional technique that uses the smoke from the herb mugwort to penetrate the skin. In this way, it stimulates the body's immune system. Often, the warm smoke provides a pleasant, comforting experience for the patient.

Diet is very important and the right choices can help reduce some symptoms. In general, acupuncture and Oriental medicine suggests refraining from eating raw and cold foods.

Call today to learn more about how diet can impact the symptoms of Crohn's

Reduce Your Risk of Getting Food Poisoning

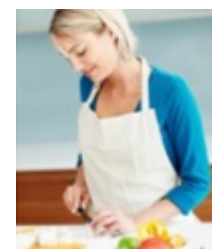
Four simple steps to reducing the occurrence of food poisoning are to clean, separate, cook and chill.

Clean: Wash hands, surfaces, utensils and platters often. Rinse all produce in cold running water before peeling, cutting or eating.

Separate: Keep foods that won't be cooked separate from raw meat and poultry. Don't use the same platter and utensils for raw and cooked meats and poultry.

Cook: Cook food to a safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria.

Chill: Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers.



If you are ill with diarrhea or vomiting, do not prepare food for others, especially infants, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems since they are more vulnerable to infection.

Acid Reflux? Try Acupuncture!

For some people, eating a heavy, spicy or fatty meal can produce the unmistakable signs of acid reflux. Symptoms can vary from a burning pain in the chest to a sour taste in the mouth as stomach acid and/or regurgitated food flows upward through the esophagus into the oral cavity. Although some may refer to these symptoms collectively as heartburn, the process is the same no matter what it is called. Additionally they may experience difficult or painful swallowing, sore throat, a dry, rough voice, or feeling of a lump in the throat that cannot be cleared away.

It is estimated that more than 20 percent of the general population is affected by acid reflux. While other groups are impacted, at least half of all asthmatic children experience symptoms, and pregnant women tend to suffer more than the average population, with half reporting severe symptoms during their second and third trimesters.

While it's true for some people that symptoms can be mild or pass quickly, others go on to experience more severe ones. Sometimes, symptoms of acid reflux can mimic the symptoms of a heart attack. This includes severe chest pain and a crushing sensation in the chest. Also of concern is the presence of black, tarry stools or black material in vomit. These are signs of bleeding in the stomach, a serious medical concern.

An acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioner may recognize the symptoms of acid reflux as relating to the stomach organ. Two examples of diagnoses would be rebellious stomach Qi and food accumulation in the stomach. Qi is a vital energy necessary for all life to exist. Both of these diagnoses call for an acupuncture treatment that will redirect energy downwards, as should naturally happen just after eating or drinking. Rebellious stomach Qi is a perfect description for some of the symptoms of acid reflux.

The stomach, according to the philosophy of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, is needed to ripen and rot food. After this process of fermentation occurs, only then may the nutrients be extracted during the next phase of digestion. Without strong stomach Qi, issues regarding malnutrition may arise. This is why an acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioner will need to evaluate a patient with acid reflux and address any nutritional deficiencies that may be present. Diet is very important in helping to calm symptoms.

Suffering from acid reflux? Call today to see how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you!

