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Staying Healthy during Cold and Flu Season

While you can get a cold or the flu at any time of the year, the peak season in the United States begins in November and runs through February. Give your immune system a much needed boost so that when it comes into contact with airborne virus particles it has a line of defense.

When it comes to staying healthy during cold and flu season, acupuncture and Oriental medicine have a lot to offer. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help prevent colds and flu by fortifying the immune system with just a few needles inserted into key points along the body's energy pathways.

As stated by Huangdi Neijing, "To treat disease that has already developed is comparable to the behavior of those persons who begin to dig a well after they have become thirsty, and of those who begin to cast weapons after they have already engaged in battle. Would these actions not be too late?"

In Oriental medicine, disease prevention begins by focusing on the protective layer around the exterior of the body called Wei Qi, or defensive energy. The Wei Qi involves acupuncture points known for strengthening the circulation of blood and energy to boost your body's defenses.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can also provide relief and faster healing if you have already come down with a cold or the flu by helping to relieve symptoms you are currently experiencing, including chills, fever, body aches, runny nose, congestion, sore throat, and cough. While bringing some immediate relief, treatments will also reduce the incidence of an upper respiratory tract infection and shorten the length of the illness.

Seasonal acupuncture treatments just four times a year also serve to tonify the inner organ systems and can correct minor annoyances before they become serious problems.

Call to schedule an appointment today and see how acupuncture can help you stay healthy this flu season!



Acupuncture for Sinusitis Relief

Sinusitis occurs mainly in young and middle-aged adults, although children are also at risk. When the condition does present itself, it can be due to one of four main causes: an infection, allergic rhinitis, formation of nasal polyps, or a deviated septum. While sinusitis simply refers to inflammation of the nasal passages, the symptoms and treatments can prove more complex. An acute case of sinusitis (recently occurring) becomes chronic when medical treatments fail to cure the problem after eight weeks.

The symptoms of sinusitis vary depending on whether the condition is acute or chronic. Many of the

symptoms for either case are the same, though there are slight variations. With chronic sinusitis, in particular, symptoms last for eight weeks or more and may include facial pain and pressure, nasal congestion, nasal discharge, trouble breathing through the nose, congestion, cough, fever, fatigue, bad breath, headache, ear pain, sore throat, or nausea. If a case of severe sinusitis develops, symptoms such as confusion, double-vision, stiff neck, swollen forehead, and shortness of breath may happen as well.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine offers help for your symptoms of sinusitis--whether acute, chronic, or frequently occurring. There are acupuncture points on the face that can help bring immediate relief from nasal congestion. One set of points lies in the folds of both sides of the nose, at the level of the nostrils. These points may also safely be self-massaged at any point to assist in clearing the nasal passages.

There are other acupuncture points that respond well to self-massage, according to the philosophy of acupuncture and Oriental medicine. To help relieve pressure from a sinus headache, try gently but firmly pressing the points located at the beginning of your eyebrows, near the nose.

In addition, you can try the same technique with a single acupuncture point found right between your eyes, at the level of the eyebrows. This point is called *Yintang* and is revered by many acupuncturists and Oriental medicine practitioners for its ability to induce calmness and send energy (Qi) in a downward direction. Therefore, massaging *Yintang* is particularly helpful in cases of congestion and pain due to sinusitis, as blockages in the sinus make proper drainage difficult and potentially give rise to other symptoms of sinusitis.

However, if your face feels too tender for this massage technique, there is a point located on the hand that directly aids issues of the face and forehead, including headaches. This acupuncture point is located in the middle of the fleshy mound found between the base of the thumb and the first finger. Feel free to press here for any discomfort in the face, head, or sinuses--whether your symptoms are from sinusitis or another condition.

Study Shows Acupuncture Provides Relief From Allergic Rhinitis Symptoms

How well does acupuncture address the symptoms of allergic rhinitis? The study titled "Acupuncture for the treatment of allergic rhinitis: a systematic review and meta-analysis," published in the January 2015 edition of the *American Journal of Rhinology and Allergy*, answers this question.

Researchers took an in-depth look at numerous scientific studies from all over the world that focused on patients with nasal problems due to allergies. To maintain the integrity of the meta-analysis, only randomized controlled trials were utilized. The focus of the investigation centered on the potency and safety of using acupuncture to address symptoms affecting the nose.

The large-scale analysis included several studies with nearly 2,400 test subjects. To properly assess the efficacy of acupuncture, researchers looked at rhinitis quality of life questionnaires and 36-item short form surveys (SF-36). These are medical tools used to evaluate a patient's symptoms.

To help discern the power of acupuncture, researchers scrutinized evaluation charts regarding the severity and symptoms of each patient. Additionally, levels of serum IgE in the bloodstream and medication usage for each participant were important factors.

In all studies, researchers discovered that the groups of patients receiving acupuncture experienced exceptional, statistically-significant reductions in nasal symptoms, compared to the participants in control groups. The results proved that acupuncture is a safe, effective therapy to relieve nasal symptoms resulting from allergies.

Source: Feng S, Han M, Fan Y, Yang G, Liao Z, Liao W, Li H. (2015). *Acupuncture for the treatment of allergic rhinitis: a systematic review and meta-analysis*. *Am J Rhinol Allergy*. 29(1):57-62. doi: 10.2500/ajra.2015.29.4116.

Protect Your Lung Qi

Lung 7, or LU 7, is one of the most powerful points on the lung meridian points. It is a popular acupuncture point to use for stopping a persistent cough and relieving a sore throat.

Besides treating those symptoms, LU 7 is often used to treat conditions related to the head and neck, such as headaches, migraines, stiff neck, facial paralysis, and toothache. LU 7 is considered to be the "command point" of the head and neck and is also used to improve circulation in the brain and stimulate memory.

This acupuncture point is located above the wrist on the inside of the arm. To find this point, interlock your thumb and index finger of one hand with those of the other, the point lies on the edge of the index finger, in a depression between the sinew and the bone.

Stimulate this point on both hands with the tip of your index finger for approximately 30 seconds or until your cough subsides.

5 Tips to Stay Healthy

Seasonal changes affect the body's environment. With wind, rain, and snow come the cold and flu viruses, which are often accompanied with aches and pains.

Guard yourself this season with these five tips:

1. Boost your Wei Qi

If you catch colds easily, have low energy and require a long time recuperating from an illness, your Wei Qi may be deficient.

Once the nature of an imbalance has been determined, a customized program can be created for you.

2. Schedule a Seasonal Tune-Up

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can prevent colds and flu by building up the immune system. Just a few needles inserted into key points strengthen the circulation of energy and consolidate the outer defense layers of skin and muscle along energy pathways so germs and viruses cannot enter through them.

3. Wash Your Hands

Good lifestyle and hygiene habits are also proven to reduce your risk of getting sick. Protect yourself from picking up germs by washing your hands regularly and remembering not to touch your face.

4. Sleep In

The Nei Ching, an ancient Chinese classic, advised people to go to sleep early, rest well, and rise late after the sun's rays have warmed the atmosphere a bit.

This preserves your own Yang Qi for the task of warming the body. Even busy, working people can boost their health by sleeping in on weekends.

5. Stress Less

Find a release valve for your stress. According to Oriental medicine, stress, frustration, and unresolved anger can play an important part in throwing the immune system off and allowing pathogens to affect the body.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine have been shown to be effective in the treatment of stress, anxiety, and depression



Boost Your Defensive Qi

Your defensive Qi, or Wei Qi, is the protective layer around the exterior of the body.

In order to boost the Wei Qi, there is one particularly important point to focus on: Dazhui or DU 14.

Often used to ward off as well as shorten the duration of colds and flu, Dazhui (DU 14) is located below the spinous process of the seventh cervical vertebrae, approximately at the level where the collar of a T-shirt sits on the neck.

Dazhui (DU 14) activates the circulation of blood and Qi to strengthen the outer defense layers of the skin and muscle, so that your system is protected against germs and viruses.

