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## Overcoming Addiction with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

According to acupuncture and Oriental medicine, emotions originate internally from different organs inside the body. Conditions and events in the external world may provoke specific reactions but, ultimately, each person is responsible for the emotion generated.

Any addiction, whether to drugs, alcohol, food, work, or other activity or substance, effectively blocks intelligence and suppresses healing abilities. Through these behaviors we choose to rely on the demands of addiction to dictate our lives, rather than taking responsibility to conduct ourselves in a healthy, life-affirming way.



Is there a body/mind connection to willpower? According to the principles of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, there is. The zhi represents willpower, drive, and determination. It manifests as the urge to persist in one's efforts and, when in deficiency, feelings of defeat, pessimism, and depression may occur. Without strong willpower, or zhi, one may easily succumb to the temptations of addiction.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help cleanse and re-balance your body and mind to manage cravings and overcome a variety of addictions, and can help manage cravings. The safe space provided during treatment is both literal and metaphorical.

Several approaches may be used when treating addictions, generally starting with therapies that help cleanse and balance. Sometimes a vague, uneasy sensation takes over after or during the process of releasing an addiction. Perhaps for the workaholic patient, it is strange and alarming to experience leisure time. Addicts require fortitude to find replacements for the dependence on substances or addictive behaviors. This is why willpower, or zhi, needs treatment to provide support and determination to discover the power within oneself--a universal necessity for overcoming any addiction.

To aid your transformation from addiction and addictive behaviors to healthier practices, try focusing on routine. Routine provides stability, and a new routine is necessary to break old habits. If your first thought in the morning is to reach for a cigarette, replace that action with another, healthier ritual.

The replacement ritual could be anything from reaching for warm water with lemon and a pinch of cayenne to refresh your system, or singing your favorite song or stating out loud your plans for the day. As long as the action is positive and consistent, it will serve your new routine and changing thought processes.

Deep breathing with visualization can also strengthen willpower and be used as a tool to curb hunger and cravings. Most patients report a marked decline in appetite and cravings with acupuncture treatment alone, but special herbs, healing foods, and exercises can definitely enhance the efficacy of the treatments.

Everyone experiences addiction in different ways with varying symptoms, and treatment is adjusted to the

individual needs of the person seeking treatment. Some respond better to a sudden, jarring change in habits, whereas others may require a slower process to adjust to the changes that must be made. At some point during the detoxification process, the next step necessary to your healing will be addressed, helping to ensure that your strengthened willpower and emotional balance lasts a lifetime.

**Are there cravings or an addiction you are working to overcome?**

**Call today to learn how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you reach optimum health!**

## **The Opioid Addiction Epidemic and How Acupuncture Can Help**

The United States loses approximately one hundred lives a day as a consequence of the current opioid epidemic--addiction and abuse of prescription painkillers like Oxycontin and Vicodin. If projections prove correct, another half a million more casualties may be on the way over the next ten years. Opioid overdose now ranks as the number one killer for Americans younger than 50 years old.

Opioids are a class of powerful drugs used primarily as a treatment for pain and provide relief in the most excruciating of cases. Morphine, codeine, heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet) and hydrocodone (Vicodin) are all classified as opioids.

### **The High Risk of Addiction to Opioids.**

Unfortunately, the risk of addiction with these drugs is high because opioids are so effective and can give users a feeling of euphoria. Short term use of these drugs is the safest option as it lowers the chances of developing a drug tolerance.

Developing a tolerance means a patient must take higher and higher doses of the drug to experience the same euphoric effects. This deadly cycle of increasing drug amounts can destroy lives and lead to a potentially deadly overdose.

### **Treatment and Recovery from Opioid Addiction**

In cases where an opioid addict undergoes detoxification, withdrawal symptoms often make the process a terribly difficult experience. Signs and symptoms associated with withdrawal from opioids include: pain, intense emotional anguish, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, hypertension, tachycardia and seizures.

Treatment options for rehabilitation generally include a gradual reduction from the drug. Special drugs such as methadone and buprenorphine can help assuage withdrawal symptoms and reduce cravings. These drugs do not produce euphoric effects and have a lower risk of addiction.

### **Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine for Opioid Dependence**

Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine treats opioid addiction in a holistic fashion. Not only is the physical body addressed, but the heart and mind as well. The heart represents the emotions, and the mind refers to the logical, cognitive functions.

A great start to assisting patients during the rehabilitation process is the utilization of a simple and effective ear acupuncture protocol. The treatment consists of ten acupuncture needles applied to five points on each ear. After needle insertion, all a patient needs to do is sit quietly in a cozy chair for at least 20 minutes, up to one hour.

The selection of ear points includes lung, shen men, autonomic point, liver and kidney. The lung point helps maintain an even, steady breathing pattern. This helps keep emotions such as grief and sadness from becoming an overwhelming burden. Additionally, it supports the respiratory and cardiovascular system. It is particularly useful for addictions related to smoking.

Shen men addresses the stress, anxiety, anguish and depression associated with opioid withdrawal. It also reduces the physical pain which may occur during the process. The autonomic point works on the nervous system by balancing the parasympathetic and sympathetic system. The former calms bodily functions, while the latter speeds things up.

The liver point aids the liver organ in cleansing the blood and removing toxic material. The kidney point is similar in function, as the kidney also plays a major role in ridding the body of harmful substances. A key difference between the points is the emotions they treat. The liver point works to reduce anger and frustration, while the kidney point helps to alleviate fear.

Some patients may require additional acupuncture points. For example, a person manifesting signs and feelings of rage could benefit with the addition of an ear point called limbic system. It reduces aggressive, compulsive behavior which may lead to violence.

### **The NADA Protocol and Addiction**

This particular auricular therapy is known as the NADA protocol. Developed in the 1970's due to the efforts of Dr. Michael Smith at the Lincoln Memorial Hospital in New York, NADA stands for the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association. Dr. Smith created the NADA protocol as a treatment to help many suffering with heroin addiction in the local community.

The success of the NADA program helped recovering addicts lower their chances of recidivism and increase their chances of entering society as healthy, drug-free individuals. In 1996, the World Health Organization declared acupuncture as a viable method to assist patients in withdrawing from chemical dependencies.

Three reasons why acupuncture receives such high accolades for its success in treating opioid addictions, and other substances as well, is due to its simplicity, cost-effectiveness and absence of negative side effects. It is also safe for patients of virtually any age group, and in most cases, for pregnant women.

Sometimes it is not only the patients who need treatment, but family members and loved ones who also suffer as their loved ones go through the withdrawal process. Application of the NADA protocol is safe for them and may help in dealing with their heavy emotions. It is support for the support team, so to speak.

With an estimated 2.5 million people dealing with opioid addiction, safe and effective methods are needed more than ever to curb this national public health crisis. Whether the addiction is from doctor prescribed opiates, or illegal street drugs like heroine, acupuncture and Oriental medicine provides treatment.

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## **Seven Addiction Recovery Tips**

In addition to getting treatment, here are seven lifestyle changes you can make to help curb cravings, improve your overall well-being, and assist in your recovery.

1. Exercise more. Exercise can reduce your stress and help you relax.
2. Get plenty of fresh fruit and vegetable juices to neutralize and clear the blood and to fortify blood sugar.
3. Carrots, celery, leafy green salads, and citrus fruits promote body alkalinity and decrease cravings.
4. Avoid junk food, sugar, and coffee. They can upset blood sugar levels and increase blood acidity, which can aggravate withdrawal symptoms.
5. Lobelia tea or green tea can be sipped daily during the detox period to keep tissues flooded with elements that discourage cravings. Lobelia is traditionally used to rid the body of a strong toxin such as snake venom.
6. Drink water. Research shows that dryness causes cravings. Sip water frequently throughout the day.



7. Practice deep breathing exercises to increase body oxygen and keep calm.

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## **Combat Cravings with Ear Massage**

Ear massage is an extremely relaxing and effective therapy aimed at decreasing cravings, reducing stress, promoting well-being, and addressing various health issues. Ear acupuncture is used throughout the world to reduce food cravings, assist in the detoxification of addictive substances, manage pain, and calm anxiety.

Ear massage triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. Studies have demonstrated that ear stimulation increases levels of endorphins in both the blood and cerebrospinal fluid.

Here is a great ear massage that you can do for yourself or your loved ones:

- Rub in small circular motions with your thumbs inside the widest upper part inside the ears, holding them from outside with the index and middle fingers.
  - Use your index finger to massage inside the smaller crevices if your thumbs don't fit and along the front of your ear where it attaches to the head.
  - Massage the earlobes by gently pulling them down and making circles with your thumb and index finger.
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## **FDA Recommends Acupuncture for Pain Management**

The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) declared acupuncture as one of the non-pharmacologic therapies recommended for the treatment of pain in "FDA Education Blueprint for Health Care Providers Involved in the Management or Support of Patients with Pain," dated May 2017.

The paper lists acupuncture as one of the many numerous ways to treat pain, which is especially significant given the current opioid addiction epidemic in the United States. In the section called Opioid Analgesics, attention is drawn to the fact that health care providers should know the depth of the epidemic, and realize the source of most of the opioid drugs being abused by the public originally come from doctor prescribed medications for individuals contending with pain.

Acupuncture can help manage certain kinds of pain, such as musculoskeletal and chronic pain. Bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints and connective tissue comprise the musculoskeletal system. It is what supports and animates the body. Chronic pain is defined as lasting for more than 12 weeks, often persisting for months or years, after the initial injury or painful medical condition.

The FDA recommends health care providers know about the existence of, and when to apply non-pharmacologic therapies, such as acupuncture. With this knowledge, acupuncture may be included in a multidisciplinary plan to safely and effectively deal with physical pain.

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