



www.kingsacupuncture.com

King's Acupuncture and Wellness Center
5859 Transit Road
East Amherst, New York 14051
716-688-1768

In This Issue

Treating Autoimmune Disease with Acupuncture



Over 50 million Americans suffer from autoimmune disease including rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, thyroid disease, Addison's disease, pernicious anemia, celiac disease, multiple sclerosis, myasthenia gravis and Guillain-Barré syndrome. An autoimmune disease occurs when the body's immune system attacks healthy tissue. Due to the complexity of treating autoimmune disorders, integrative medicine solutions including acupuncture and Oriental medicine have received much attention as successful therapies in their treatment.

Acupuncture is specifically noted for its use in pain relief, regulating the immune system, managing symptoms and improving quality of life.

What Causes Autoimmune Disease?

Under normal conditions, an immune response cannot be triggered against the cells of one's own body. In certain cases, however, immune cells make a mistake and attack the very cells that they are meant to protect. This can lead to a variety of autoimmune diseases. They encompass a broad category of over 100 diseases in which the person's immune system attacks his or her own cells and tissue.

The exact mechanisms causing these changes are not completely understood, but bacteria, viruses, toxins, and some drugs may play a role in triggering an autoimmune process in someone who already has a genetic (inherited) predisposition to develop such a disorder. It is theorized that the inflammation initiated by these agents--toxic or infectious--somehow provokes in the body a "sensitization" (autoimmune reaction) in the involved tissues.

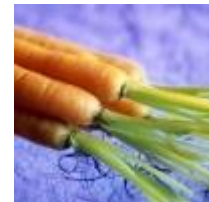
As the disease develops, vague symptoms start to appear, such as joint and muscle pain, general muscle weakness, possible rashes or low-grade fever, trouble concentrating, or weight loss. Numbness and tingling in hands and feet, dry eyes, hair loss, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, or repeated miscarriages may also indicate that something is wrong with the immune system.

How Acupuncture Treats Autoimmune Disorders

According to Oriental medicine, autoimmune disorders occur when there is an imbalance within the body. Imbalance can come from an excess or deficiency of

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Relief from Addison's Disease Symptoms
6 Food Tips for Autoimmune Disorders

6 Food Tips for Autoimmune Disorders



A class of plant chemicals -- known as bioflavonoids -- has been found to dramatically reduce inflammation and improve symptoms associated with autoimmune disorders.

Tea

Both green and black tea contain the flavonoids catechins and theaflavins, which are beneficial in autoimmune disease.

Apples

Apples (with the skin on) contain the flavonoid quercetin, which can reduce allergic reactions and decrease inflammation.

Quercetin also occurs naturally in other foods, such as berries, red grapes, red onions, capers and black tea.

Yin and Yang that disrupts the flow of Qi, or vital energy, through the body. Acupuncture is used to help the body restore balance, treating the root of the disorder, while specifically addressing the symptoms that are unique to each individual.

Clinical research has shown that acupuncture causes physical responses in nerve cells, the pituitary gland and parts of the brain. These responses can cause the body to release proteins, hormones and brain chemicals that control a number of body functions. It is proposed that, by these actions, acupuncture affects blood pressure, body temperature and the immune system.

In addition to acupuncture, your treatment program to manage your autoimmune disorder may involve a combination of therapies, including stress reducing exercises, moderate physical activity, herbal medicine, nutritional support and bodywork.

Relief from Addison's Disease Symptoms

Addison's disease, also known as adrenal insufficiency, occurs when the adrenal gland cannot produce adequate amounts of the hormones cortisol and aldosterone. This can be a serious and potentially life-threatening situation, as the adrenal gland influences many essential functions in the body. The risk of getting this disease is the same for all people, regardless of age and other factors. Signs and symptoms may take months to appear, or they may develop very quickly and unexpectedly.

When determining your diagnosis, all symptoms are assessed, even ones that may not seem directly related to Addison's disease. This is because acupuncture and Oriental medicine has the unique ability to treat the whole person and not just the disease. This means each patient suffering from Addison's disease could potentially have a different diagnosis and therefore a different acupuncture treatment plan.

For example, if a patient experiences muscle weakness and diarrhea as the main complaints, an acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioner may determine that spleen deficiency plays an important role in the way the disease presents itself. Perhaps this patient will receive an acupuncture treatment that emphasizes a strengthening of the spleen.

According to acupuncture and Oriental medicine, some functions of the spleen include keeping the bowel's movements running smoothly and helping maintain muscle and limb strength. So, no matter what your specific complaints may be, acupuncture and Oriental medicine is equipped to help you manage the signs and symptoms of Addison's disease.

Carrots

Carotenoids are a family of plant pigments that include beta-carotene. A lack of carotenoids in the diet is thought to promote inflammation.

Good sources of carotenoids include apricots, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, spinach, kale, butternut squash and collard greens.

Ginger

Recent studies show that ginger reduces inflammation by inhibiting prostaglandin and suppresses the immune system's production of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines, reducing disease severity in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

Omega-3

Omega-3 essential fatty acids can counter the formation of chemicals that cause inflammation. Good natural sources include flaxseed oil and salmon.

Fiber

A healthy and active colon can decrease food sensitivity, which, in turn, can lighten the burden on your immune system.