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Acupuncture for Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women, the leading threat for men, and is more deadly than all forms of cancer combined, according to health organizations. People of all ages and population groups are affected. There may be symptoms of cardiovascular disease such as shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, back or jaw pain, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting, pain in the lower chest or upper abdomen, and extreme fatigue, but in about 64 percent of women who die suddenly of coronary heart disease, there were none.



For that reason, when it comes to cardiovascular health, the focus is on prevention. For heart health, it's important to avoid systematic harm by managing high blood pressure and cholesterol, reducing stress, improving sleep quality, maintaining a healthy weight, increasing physical activity, and smoking cessation. If you are having issues in any of these areas, acupuncture and Chinese medicine can help.

5 Ways Acupuncture Helps Heart Health

1. *Manage High Blood Pressure*

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 at the Susan Samueli Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of California, Irvine, were able to stimulate the release of opioids, which decreases the heart's activity and its need for oxygen and as a result lowers blood pressure.

2. *Maintain a Healthy Weight*

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine are excellent adjunctive tools when it comes to losing weight. They can help to energize the body, maximize the absorption of nutrients, regulate elimination, control overeating, suppress the appetite, and reduce anxiety.

3. *Reduce Stress*

Numerous studies have demonstrated the substantial benefits of acupuncture in the treatment of stress, anxiety, and mental health. In addition to acupuncture, Chinese medicine offers many techniques that can be integrated into your life to keep stress in check.

4. *Improve Sleep Quality*

Poor sleep has been linked with high blood pressure, atherosclerosis, heart failure, heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, and obesity. Acupuncture has shown great success in treating a wide array of sleep problems without any of the side effects of prescription or over-the-counter sleep aids. Acupuncture treatments focus on the root disharmony within the body, assisting it to achieve better sleep and an overall improvement of physical and mental health.

5. Smoking Cessation

Smoking is a major cause of coronary artery disease. In fact, about 20 percent of all deaths from heart disease are directly related to cigarette smoking. Acupuncture has shown to be an effective treatment for smoking cessation. Treatments focus on jitters, cravings, irritability, and restlessness--symptoms that people commonly complain about when they quit. It also aids in relaxation and detoxification.

By integrating acupuncture and Chinese medicine into a heart-healthy lifestyle, you can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease. One obvious way to keep your heart in tip-top shape is by maintaining an acceptable blood pressure level. Acupuncture and Chinese medicine provide treatments that will work directly to reduce high blood pressure and mitigate the symptoms of stress.

Come in for a consultation to see how acupuncture can benefit your heart and help you to live a long, healthy life!

Reduce Your High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a common disease making one out of three hearts work harder to pump oxygen-rich blood through the arteries. High blood pressure makes the heart work harder increasing its oxygen demands. Excessive pressure can lead to an enlarged heart (cardiomegaly), and damage blood vessels in the kidneys and brain.

Your emotional state, time of day, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, medication, thyroid problems, and obstructive sleep apnea are just some factors that can raise your blood pressure from the average reading of 120/80 mmHg to hypertensive levels of 140/90 mmHg or above. Risk factors for developing chronic hypertension include excessive alcohol consumption, a high salt and low potassium diet, and an inactive lifestyle.

It is very common for a person with hypertension to not experience any symptoms. If you do experience symptoms they may include headaches, shortness of breath, nosebleeds, fatigue, confusion, vision problems, and blood in the urine.

A German study published in the June 2007 issue of *Circulation* found that acupuncture significantly lowers both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. The top number in a blood pressure reading is systolic and refers to the force of blood flow when the heart is actively beating. The bottom figure is diastolic and measures the strength of flow when the heart is at rest. The extent of the blood pressure reductions by acupuncture treatments was comparable to those seen with anti-hypertensive medication or aggressive lifestyle changes, including radical salt restrictions. By the end of the 6 weeks, 24-hour ambulatory systolic and diastolic blood pressures were significantly reduced from baseline in the acupuncture-treated patients while there were no significant changes seen in the sham acupuncture group.

According to acupuncture and Chinese medicine, the presence of dampness in the body can cause problems with the digestive system, low energy, swelling, and weight gain. When the stomach and spleen weaken, this condition has the potential to obstruct the body mechanics responsible for regulating blood pressure. Acupuncture can assist the body in removing excess body fluids and help normalize blood lipid levels.

Source: Flachskampf FA, Gallasch J, Gefeller O, Gan J, Mao J, Pfahlberg AB, Wortmann A, Klinghammer L, Pfleiderer W, Daniel WG. "Randomized trial of acupuncture to lower blood pressure." Circulation. 2007 Jun 19;115(24):3121-9. Epub 2007 Jun 4.

Electro-acupuncture and Exercise Therapy for Coronary Disease

A study in the September 2015 issue of the Journal of Clinical & Experimental Cardiology demonstrates the value of using acupuncture, in combination with exercise, for people diagnosed with coronary heart disease.

For the trial, 108 people with a diagnosis of coronary heart disease, were divided into four random groups. The first was the control group, in which no treatment was given. Patients in the second received only acupuncture treatments, and those in the third solely engaged in aerobic exercise. Finally, the fourth group of participants were given a combination of acupuncture and exercise.

The treatments occurred five times a week for a total of 12 weeks. The aerobic exercise regime consisted of a 30-minute workout. After every session, the patients had their heart rate variability (HHV), heart rate recovery (HRR), oxidative stress levels, and physical ability checked and rated.

At the conclusion of the trial, the patients who received a combination of acupuncture and aerobic training showed statistically significant improvements in comparison to all the other groups. Researchers concluded that patients with coronary heart disease could enjoy outstanding benefits from using electro-acupuncture and exercise therapy.

Contact an acupuncturist today to schedule an appointment or to learn more about acupuncture and Oriental medicine for cardiovascular health

Source: Wang L., Zhang N., Pan H., et al. (2015). A Combination of Electro-Acupuncture and Aerobic Exercise Improves Cardiovascular Function in Patients with Coronary Heart Disease. Retrieved from Journal of Clinical and Experimental Cardiology.

Acupuncture Increases Brain Function for Patients with MCI

There has been a push in recent years to study mild cognitive impairment (MCI), which causes issues with memory, cognition, and learning. MCI occurs prior to the onset of Alzheimer's disease and symptoms go beyond normal, age-related changes.

There are no pharmacological drugs available to treat MCI in the long-run, so researchers set out to discover if acupuncture could provide substantial medical benefits. The results of their efforts appear in the study "Modulatory effects of acupuncture on brain networks in mild cognitive impairment patients" published in the February 2017 issue of Neural Regeneration Research.

Half of the study participants received real acupuncture treatments specifically designed to improve cognitive functions in the brain. The other half of the patients received sham acupuncture which did not specifically treat MCI or increase cognitive function. All of the study participants had five acupuncture sessions per week for one month.

Using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), researchers tracked the lines of communications between different areas of the brain related to cognitive functions. The real acupuncture group showed a statistically significant increase in their cognitive brain functions after their treatments. The sham acupuncture group did not show any improvement in the cognitive-related areas of their brains.

The study showed that acupuncture is effective for improving cognitive functions in patients afflicted with MCI. Due to the low risk for side effects and the outstanding results of the study, the researchers recommended the use of acupuncture to improve cognition in MCI patients.

Source: Tan, T., Wang, D., Huang, J., Zhou, X., Yuan, X., Liang, J., ... Chen, S. (2017). Modulatory effects of

acupuncture on brain networks in mild cognitive impairment patients. *Neural Regeneration Research*, 12(2), 250-258. <http://doi.org/10.4103/1673-5374.200808>.
