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Treating Autoimmune Diseases 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 treatment therapies. 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. As the disease develops, vague symptoms start to appear, such as joint and muscle pain, general muscle weakness, rashes, 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 and Oriental Medicine 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 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 bodily functions. Acupuncture affects blood pressure, body temperature, and immune system by these actions.

In addition to acupuncture, a 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.

To learn more about how acupuncture can safely and effectively be incorporated into a treatment plan for an autoimmune disorder, please call for a consultation today.

Are you struggling with an autoimmune disorder? Call today to schedule an appointment!

Relief from Addison's Disease Symptoms

Addison's disease, or 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. As a result, each patient suffering from Addison's disease could potentially have a different diagnosis, and a different acupuncture treatment plan.

For example, if a patient experiences muscle weakness and diarrhea as the main complaints a spleen deficiency plays an important role in the way the disease presents itself and treatments may focus on strengthening of the spleen. According to acupuncture and Oriental medical theory, some functions of the spleen include keeping the bowel's movements running smoothly and helping maintain muscle and limb strength.

Are you struggling with Addison's Disease? Call today to see how acupuncture can help you!

Study Finds Acupuncture Effective for Systemic Lupus Pain

Acupuncture can be an effective treatment for pain caused by systemic erythematosus lupus (SLE). These positive results were shown in the 2008 study 'Acupuncture for Systemic Lupus Erythematosus: A pilot study RCT feasibility and safety study' published in Lupus which assessed the safety and effectiveness of acupuncture as a means to treat pain associated with lupus.

The trial included 24 patients diagnosed with SLE who were randomly chosen to be given either standard acupuncture treatments, acupuncture treatments performed with a minimum of needles, or to remain on their existing treatment plan. The patients in the acupuncture group received a total of 10 sessions over a 5-6 week period.

At the end of the trial, 40% of the patients in both the standard acupuncture treatment group and the minimal needling group experienced an improvement in their pain levels of at least 30%. In contrast, the group that remained on their usual care plan reported no improvement in their pain levels. The study concluded that acupuncture is a valid, safe, and effective method to treat pain in patients with SLE.

Relief from Raynaud's Syndrome

Raynaud's syndrome, or Raynaud's disease, causes a sudden constriction of the vessels supplying blood to the skin, largely affecting the fingers and toes. These symptoms may be triggered by cold temperatures or emotional stress. Most cases are mild and can be treated with lifestyle changes such as wearing warm gloves and socks and avoiding rapid temperature changes. While not life-threatening, in rare cases, when left untreated, the affected tissue may become necrotic and gangrenous.

According to a small 1997 study published in the Journal of Internal Medicine, acupuncture is effective in treating primary Raynaud's syndrome. The patients that received acupuncture experienced a statistically significant decrease in the frequency, severity, and duration of their vasospastic attacks. The patients in the control group showed no improvement. Researchers concluded that acupuncture was safe and effective for treating the symptoms of primary Raynaud's syndrome.

As a cold environment or object usually triggers an attack, this can indicate a Yang deficiency. When Yang energy is low, blood circulation may slow down as a result. Symptoms of Yang deficiency include feelings of cold, lower back or knee pain, and a weak pulse. Treatment, in this case, would focus on boosting Yang energy, circulation, and the immune system.

Call today to see how acupuncture can improve your quality of life!

7 Nutrients to Support the Immune System

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 catechin and theaflavin, which are beneficial in treating autoimmune disease.



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.

Carrots - Carotenoids are a family of plant pigments that include beta-carotene. A lack of carotenoids in the diet can cause inflammation. Good sources of carotenoids include apricots, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, spinach, kale, butternut squash and collard greens.

Garlic - contains a compound called allicin which supports the immune system and has both antimicrobial and antioxidant qualities. Research suggests that components of garlic may reduce the incidence of cancer cell formation in the body in much the same way vitamin C does.

Ginger - contains compounds called gingerols that reduce inflammation in the body by inhibiting prostaglandin and suppressing the immune system's production of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines.

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 and lighten the burden on your immune system.
