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## Get Arthritis Relief with Acupuncture

Most people are familiar with the term arthritis, which may conjure up images of twisted, knobby fingers or achy knees, but did you know there are over 100 different types of arthritis?

For many people, arthritis pain and inflammation cannot be avoided as the body ages. In fact, most people over the age of 50 show some signs of arthritis as joints naturally degenerate over time. Fortunately, arthritis can frequently be managed with acupuncture and Oriental medicine.



**Rheumatoid arthritis (RA)** - a chronic, autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks joint tissue. The synovial fluid that encases the joints thickens due to inflammation. This can cause pain and structural deformities. Other symptoms include fatigue and fever.

**Osteoarthritis (OA)** - also called degenerative joint disease. When cartilage, the protective cushioning found between the bones, starts eroding away, symptoms of OA may result. This can cause pain, visible swelling and difficulty moving the afflicted joint.

**Psoriatic arthritis** - an inflammatory arthritis associated with the skin condition psoriasis, a chronic autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks the skin. The most common symptoms include joint swelling, redness, fatigue and pain. Severe cases may result in misshapen joints.

While each type of arthritis has very different causes, risk factors and effects on the body, they often share a common symptom: persistent joint pain. Often the reason symptoms appear or 'flare-up' is obvious. Dampness pervading the air before a rainstorm, overusing arthritic joints or stress may trigger symptoms. Other times, the exact cause remains a mystery. However, no matter the origin, acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help.

### Diagnosis and Treatment of Arthritis with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

According to Oriental medical theory, arthritis arises when the cyclical flow of Qi (energy) in the meridians becomes blocked resulting in pain, soreness, numbness and stiffness. This blockage is called Bi-syndrome and is successfully treated using a combination of treatment modalities. The acupuncture points and herbs that are used depend on whether the underlying cause of the blockage of Qi (arthritis) is caused by wind, cold, dampness or damp-heat.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine aim to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques such as acupuncture, bodywork, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 30 patients are treated with Oriental medicine for joint pain, each of them will receive a unique, customized treatment.

**Call today to learn how acupuncture can be incorporated into your treatment plan for arthritis!**

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## Study on Rheumatoid Arthritis

A pilot study found in the medical publication International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases 2010, demonstrated the safety and efficacy of acupuncture in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (RA). The study criteria focused on the disease activity, pain scores, functional ability and quality of life issues for the study participants. To evaluate disease activity, researchers used the DAS28 test. This test measures and records the levels of tenderness and inflammation of 28 separate joints in the body.

The study, conducted at Kwong Wah Hospital in Hong Kong, provided an average of 14 acupuncture sessions for each patient. At the end, researchers determined that improvements in the physical, emotional and social well-being of some of the participants improved. The improvement was significant enough to conclude that acupuncture is a viable treatment method to reduce pain and other symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

*Source: Lao WN et al. Effects of Acupuncture on Rheumatoid Arthritis. International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases. Conference: 14th Congress of Asia Pacific League of Associations for Rheumatology, APLAR 2010 Hong Kong Hong Kong. Conference Publication 2010; 13: 231.*

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## Relief from Psoriatic Arthritis

Psoriatic arthritis is a joint disease that affects people who suffer from psoriasis. A chronic and recurrent condition, psoriatic arthritis can have periods of remission with little to no symptoms present. No matter what state the disease is in, acupuncture can provide relief. During times of remission, acupuncture can help strengthen the immune system and reduce the duration and severity of the next episode.

The most common symptoms of psoriatic arthritis include joint pain, stiffness, swelling and redness. Any of the joints in the body can be affected. This includes the toes, fingers, neck and spine. When the spinal column is affected, a condition called spondylitis may ensue, making movement difficult and painful. When the hands or feet are affected, they may become moderately to severely physically deformed. There's no reason to be tentative or fearful of utilizing acupuncture during a symptom outbreak. There are many acupuncture point combinations available, so avoiding areas of inflammation is not a problem.

A psoriatic arthritis patient may be diagnosed as having Bi-syndrome. This is a class of disorders that form when meridians become blocked and interfere with the quality and flow of blood and Qi. Patients suffering from Bi-syndrome easily succumb to outside forces such as heat, cold, dryness, dampness and wind. For someone suffering from hot, painful knuckle joints, the predominant pathogenic agent is heat. Therefore, treatment may consist of reducing heat in the area by nourishing the blood and encouraging the free flow of Qi. When the area is free of stagnation, heat is less prone to build up.

Pain and other symptoms of psoriatic arthritis may fade away with regular acupuncture treatments and healthy changes in eating habits. Dietary suggestions include avoiding sugary, spicy and fried foods.

**Help is available if you suffer from psoriatic arthritis. Contact us today for a consultation!**

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## Reduce the Impact

**The Arthritis Foundation recommends the following to reduce the impact of arthritis:**

**Get Active** - Regular physical activity helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints. Tai Chi is a Chinese exercise that strengthens muscles, improves balance and flexibility, promotes relaxation, and has been shown to relieve chronic joint pain.

**Control Weight** - Maintaining an appropriate weight or reducing weight to a recommended level reduces the risk of osteoarthritis. Losing just 10 pounds relieves 40 pounds of pressure on knees. For those living with symptoms, losing 15 pounds can cut knee pain in half.



**Modify Job Tasks** - Try to modify your movements, since repeated use of joints in jobs that require bending and lifting is associated with an increased risk of developing osteoarthritis.

**Call today to learn how to reduce strain on your joints!**

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## **Anti-Inflammatory Foods**

A balanced, varied diet can help ease the pain of arthritis by providing vitamins and minerals that keep your joints healthy. Avoiding "damp" foods, such as dairy products and greasy or spicy fare, also helps joints.

**Here are some healthy and delicious choices to include in your diet:**

**Ginger** - Ginger is a natural anti-inflammatory. A fresh ginger tea can be made by combining a half teaspoon of grated ginger with 8 ounces of boiling water. Cover and steep for 10 to 15 minutes, then strain and add honey to taste.

**Fresh Pineapple** - Bromelain, an enzyme in pineapple, reduces inflammation. Be sure the pineapple is fresh, not canned or frozen.

**Turmeric** - A natural anti-inflammatory, it can be used in many food preparations including soups, sauces and salad dressings.

**Fish** - Cold-water fish, such as salmon and mackerel, contain omega-3 fatty acids, which help keep joints healthy as well as reduce pain and swelling.

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