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Acupuncture for Integrative Oncology Support

The American Cancer Society has reported that half of all men and a third of all women in the United States will develop cancer during their lifetimes. Although there are many forms of cancer, all forms of the disease begin with abnormal cells that grow out of control.

Unlike other illnesses that are eradicated by the body's natural defense system, cancer needs to be treated with powerful medical interventions. Unfortunately, most of the current cancer treatments available have some debilitating side effects.



Acupuncture and Oriental medicine have received much attention as an adjunctive therapy in cancer treatments because they address many of the unpleasant symptoms and side effects that come up during and after chemotherapy, radiation, biological therapy and surgery.

If you are currently undergoing treatment for cancer, acupuncture and Oriental medicine can provide real help by decreasing many of the side effects associated with conventional cancer treatments.

Some of the issues acupuncture can help with include pain management, nausea, stress, fatigue, depression, anxiety, dry mouth, fluid retention, night sweats, hot flashes, and weight maintenance.

Acupuncture takes a holistic approach to health care and is particularly useful in providing pain relief, reducing the impact of side effects, accelerating recovery, and improving overall quality of life.

According to the National Cancer Institute, acupuncture may cause physical responses in nerve cells, the pituitary gland, and parts of the brain. It is proposed that, by stimulating physical responses in these areas, acupuncture positively affects blood pressure and body temperature, boosts immune system activity, and causes the body's natural painkillers, such as endorphins, to be released.

To learn more about how acupuncture can safely and effectively be incorporated into an oncology treatment plan, call for a consultation today!

Science Provides Proof of Acupuncture's Helpful Role in Cancer Therapy

Clinical trials have examined the effects of acupuncture on cancer as a disease, as well as the symptoms caused by cancer treatments. Results have shown that, for many patients, treatment with acupuncture relieves symptoms or keeps them from getting worse.

Relief for Nausea and Vomiting:

The strongest evidence of the beneficial effect of acupuncture has come from clinical trials that investigated

its use for relieving nausea and vomiting. Several types of clinical trials using different acupuncture methods showed acupuncture reduced nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy and surgery.

Boosts the Immune System:

Human studies on the effect of acupuncture on the immune system of cancer patients showed that it improved immune system response, including an increase in the number of white blood cells.

Improves Pain Management:

In clinical studies, acupuncture reduced pain levels for some cancer patients. In one study, most of the patients treated with acupuncture were able to stop taking drugs for pain relief or to reduce their doses.

Relieves Pain and Stiffness during Hormone Therapy:

In 2010, the Journal of Clinical Oncology published the results of a small study that concluded that acupuncture helped relieve pain and stiffness in breast cancer patients who were simultaneously being treated with hormone therapies.

Minimizes Dry Mouth:

In 2009, the medical journal Head and Neck reported the results of a pilot study done at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. The subjects were people suffering from head and neck cancer. The authors concluded that the pilot study demonstrated that acupuncture can improve the subjective symptoms of radiation-induced dry mouth as early as two weeks after starting treatment. They found that benefits can last for one month after treatment ends.

A study published in January 2000 in the medical journal Oral Diseases, confirms the efficacy of treating xerostomia with acupuncture and Oriental medicine. Researchers analyzed the data of 70 patients who suffered from dry mouth due to radiation therapies, Sjogren's disease, and other causes. Researchers discovered that patients who received 24 acupuncture treatments had an outstanding improvement in their salivary flow rate (SFR) for up to six months after treatment. It was also concluded that continued acupuncture treatments could increase one's salivary flow rate for up to three years.

Reduces Pain and Shoulder Dysfunction:

In 2008, Dr. David Pfister, chief of the head and neck medical oncology service at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, reported that patients found significant reductions in both dry mouth and pain and shoulder dysfunction after neck dissection with the help of acupuncture. Dr. Pfister highlighted the potential role of acupuncture in oncology.

Reduces Hot Flashes:

In 2011 a Yale University/University of Pittsburgh study of women with hot flashes brought on by conventional breast cancer treatment, found that women who received acupuncture had a 30 percent reduction in hot flashes.

Acupressure for Nausea Relief

Nausea is an indicator that something else is wrong. Depending on the severity and duration of vomiting, some level of dehydration may occur. In severe cases, this may become a medical emergency. Small sips of warm water may help the patient stay hydrated or, if this is not tolerable, sucking on ice chips may help.

Here are three simple acupressure techniques you can perform at home to help alleviate your nausea.

1. Pericardium 6 (P6) or Inner Gate

To locate this point, place your hand with the palm facing up. Starting from the middle of the wrist crease, place three fingers down below your wrist. Your index finger should be in the middle of two tendons. If you are having trouble locating the tendons, flex your wrist and they should be displayed more prominently.

Press Inner Gate lightly with the pad of your thumb. You can slowly increase pressure and go deeper into the point. Continue this exercise for up to five minutes if you are using heavy pressure. However, some people experience more relief from nausea when they continuously press with gentle to moderate pressure. If this is the case for you, it is safe to apply acupressure for longer periods of time. This may be especially helpful in cases of motion sickness.

2. Outer Gate or San Jiao 5 (SJ5)

If your nausea still persists, you can activate this partner point to Inner Gate. It is found on the opposite side of the forearm from Inner Gate. With your thumb on Inner Gate and your middle finger on Outer Gate, complete the circuit by squeezing the points together using moderate pressure. Hold for a few seconds and then release. This can be done for up to five minutes. If you feel you need a little extra self-care, you can place your hands near your heart, close your eyes, and breathe deeply as you perform this technique.

3. Abdominal Circular Motions

This exercise covers a larger area, and is less exacting. First, put your hands on your hips, at the level of your waistline. Next, adjust your fingers so they are all below your ribs, with your pinky resting around the level of your belly button. Your fingers should be lined up with the nipples. Press into the abdomen using circular motions and gradually expand your motions outwards for another couple of inches. This technique can be quite soothing and is best when performed sitting down, for two to three minutes.

Cancer Prevention in Daily Life

Many items in the produce aisle can help, but other foods in the supermarket can also help protect your health and the health of your family.

Carotenoids - Found in produce like cantaloupe and carrots, these plant chemicals act as antioxidants and have been shown to reduce the risk of lung cancer.

Cruciferous vegetables - High in vitamins, fiber, and potent anti-cancer phytochemicals, cruciferous vegetables are widely considered to be one of the healthiest food choices you can make. Studies have shown that this vegetable group is linked to lower rates of prostate cancer and has the ability to stop the growth of cancer cells for tumors in the breast, uterine lining, lung, colon, liver and cervix.



Ellagic Acid - Found in raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, walnuts, pecans and pomegranates, this phytochemical can act as an antioxidant, and may help break down and remove some cancer-causing substances.

Resveratrol - A polyphenol that may have antioxidant properties, resveratrol is found in the skin of red grapes, cocoa, peanuts, blueberries, and cranberries.

Whole Grains - Fiber is rich in antioxidants, helps fight colon cancer, and the phenolic compounds in whole grains may help reduce the risk of certain gastrointestinal cancers.

Folate - Linked to lowered risk for gastrointestinal and pancreatic cancers, folate is found in dark green leafy vegetables, fruits and juices, nuts, beans, peas, dairy products, poultry and meat, eggs, seafood, and grains.

Pomegranate Juice - Extremely antioxidant-rich, this juice helps prevent colon and prostate cancer.

Relief for Dry Mouth

Dry mouth, also called xerostomia, sounds harmless but can create distressing symptoms. In a normal mouth, small glands produce saliva, which then helps in the processes of speaking, eating, swallowing, and

tasting.

Saliva also contributes to good oral health, as it hinders the formation of cavities by reducing the build-up of harmful acids in the mouth. Xerostomia increases the chances for bad breath, dry nasal passages, and a hoarse throat as well.

Dry mouth manifests when there is an imbalance of yin and yang in the body. In this case, the yin quality of moistness is not present, or only in small quantities. Further examination is needed to determine the proper treatment.

To start addressing the issue right away, here are a few ideas to practice at home.

Frequent, small sips of water, with a little lemon or lime squeezed into it, may help moisturize your mouth.

Try to sleep with your mouth shut and just breathe through your nose while falling asleep.

Avoid drying substances like tobacco, caffeine, and alcohol.

Consider ending each meal with a light, warm vegetable broth to coat your mouth and throat.

