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Strengthen Your Digestive Health with Acupuncture

More than 95 million Americans suffer from digestive disorders ranging from constipation, diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome to more serious conditions such as acid reflux (GERD), ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. In fact, more than 35 million physician office visits a year are due to gastrointestinal complaints. Reports confirm that acupuncture and Oriental medicine can offer relief from even the most complex digestive problems.



Diagnosis and Treatment of Digestive Disorders

Evidence that Oriental medicine has been used for digestive disorders can be found in early medical literature dating back to 3 AD, where specific acupuncture points and herbal formulas for borborygmus (rumbling or gurgling in the intestines), abdominal pain and diarrhea with pain are discussed.

According to Oriental medical theory, most digestive disorders are due to disharmony in the spleen and stomach. The spleen plays a central part in the health and vitality of the body, taking a lead role in the assimilation of nutrients and maintenance of physical strength. It turns digested food from the stomach into usable nutrients and Qi (energy). Many schools of thought have been formed around this organ; the premise being that the proper functioning of the "middle" is the key to all aspects of vitality.

By taking into account a person's constitution and varied symptoms, a treatment plan is designed specifically for the individual to bring their "middle" back into harmony and optimize the proper functioning of the digestive system. A variety of techniques can be used during treatment including acupuncture, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore digestive health.

Is your digestive system functioning as well as it could? Acupuncture and Oriental medicine are extremely effective at treating a wide array of digestive disorders. Call today for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and Acupuncture

A common disorder affecting 10 to 20 percent of adults at some point in their lives, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) was once called "spastic colon" and has a combination of symptoms that may include constipation, diarrhea, gas, bloating, fatigue and headaches that can be worsened by certain foods, stress and other irritants. IBS results from nervous interference with the normal function of the lower digestive tract. The symptoms are variable and change over time.

While other patterns may be present, IBS is typically considered a disharmony between the liver and the spleen meridians in Oriental medicine. The liver meridian is responsible for the smooth flow of Qi and blood throughout the body. This flow can be upset by emotions or stress, causing stagnation of Qi or blood. Oriental medicine views the spleen meridian as being associated with the function of digestion and

transforming food into energy (Qi and blood). This can be weakened by a number of factors including overeating unhealthy foods, overwork, stress, fatigue, and lack of exercise. When the spleen meridian is weak and the liver meridian is not moving smoothly, the liver overacts on the spleen and can manifest as symptoms of IBS. Symptoms can be managed by avoiding overeating, exercise, identifying trigger foods and reducing stress.

Do you suffer from Irritable Bowel Syndrome? Call today to see how Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can improve your quality of life!

Acupuncture for Acid Reflux Disease

A study published in the *American Journal of Physiology - Gastrointestinal and Liver (2005)* indicates that stimulation of certain acupuncture points inhibits esophageal sphincter relaxations by as much as 40 percent.

Although the cause of *gastro-esophageal reflux disease*, or GERD, is still unknown, there are treatments available on the market to help with the symptoms. However, many of the existing treatments come with side effects and their effectiveness can be limited.

The *American Physiological Society* opened eyes by pointing to the effectiveness of electrical acupuncture point stimulation in reducing the key mechanism of GERD, transient lower esophageal sphincter relaxations (TLESRs). This important muscle allows food to pass into the stomach when working normally. In people who have GERD, the muscle relaxes at the wrong times, allowing stomach acid to churn up into the esophagus and cause heartburn symptoms.

By applying only mild stimulation to an acupuncture point on the wrist known as Neiguan (Pericardium 6), researchers were able to reduce the frequency of TLESRs from six to 3.5 an hour in research subjects. Sham stimulation of a hip point produced no comparable change.

Acupuncture Treats Food Poisoning

Food poisoning arises from eating contaminated foods containing a variety of microorganisms including bacteria, viruses and parasites and is also known as food-borne illness, infectious diarrhea, or gastroenteritis. The most common bacteria to cause food poisoning are salmonella, staphylococcus aureus, E. coli and shigella. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can relieve symptoms, hasten recovery and strengthen the digestive system to prevent future incidents of food poisoning, avert development of chronic immune deficiencies and increase energy levels.



Food poisoning is marked by severe diarrhea, fever, cramping, abdominal pain, flu-like symptoms, vomiting and diarrhea. Most cases of food poisoning clear up on their own within a week without any medical assistance; however, it can take several months before bowel habits return to normal. Often the digestive system is severely weakened after a bout of food poisoning, making the infected person more susceptible to food poisoning in the future. A small number of persons with food poisoning develop an autoimmune disease called Reiter's syndrome. It can last for months or years and can lead to chronic arthritis.

Treatment of food poisoning is rest and hydration to prevent fluid and electrolyte loss due to vomiting and diarrhea. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be used to relieve nausea and vomiting, hasten recovery by assisting the body to eliminate the pathogen faster, and strengthen the digestive system to prevent any re-occurrences or development of a chronic immune disorder. After acute symptoms subside, acupuncture treatments focus on strengthening the digestive system and improving energy levels to bring about a full recovery.

Reduce Your Risk of Getting Food Poisoning

Four simple steps to reducing the risk of food poisoning are to clean, separate, cook and chill.

Clean: Wash hands, surfaces, utensils and platters often. Rinse all produce in cold running water before peeling, cutting or eating.

Separate: Keep foods that won't be cooked separate from raw meat and poultry. Don't use the same platter and utensils for raw and cooked meats and poultry.

Cook: Cook food to a safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria.

Chill: Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers.

If you are ill with diarrhea or vomiting, do not prepare food for others, especially infants, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems since they are more vulnerable to infection.

Ginger for Intestinal Upset

Ginger has been found to increase the secretion of gastric juice. In fact, ginger can be used for most digestive upsets that involve nausea, vomiting, cramping, abdominal pain, indigestion or diarrhea. This means that food is digested more quickly, creating an unfriendly environment for bacteria that could wreak havoc with your stomach and intestines.



In a study published in the October 2007 issue of the American Chemical Society's Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, researchers in Taiwan looked at the role of a ginger extract in blocking the toxin that causes 210 million cases of diarrhea worldwide. The toxin is produced by enterotoxigenic E. coli, which accounts for 380,000 worldwide deaths annually. The study found that zingerone, a compound in ginger, was the likely compound responsible for blocking the toxin.

Whether your digestive problem is due to eating contaminated food, stomach flu, pregnancy or motion sickness, ginger is one of the most effective agents around!