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Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine for Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a chronic disease known for causing extensive musculoskeletal pain that is debilitating and quality-of-life reducing. The disorder affects both the soft tissue and the joints. While the majority of patients are women, anyone with a family history of fibromyalgia, a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or a diagnosis of a rheumatic disease such as lupus are at increased risk.



Of the estimated 2 percent of the population diagnosed with fibromyalgia, research shows that up to 90 percent use complementary or alternative medicine to manage their symptoms. Acupuncture, in particular, has become a popular and effective treatment choice.

Characterized by chronic widespread pain fibromyalgia sufferers may also experience a heightened and painful response to pressure, insomnia, fatigue, and digestive problems. Emotional health and mental clarity may also destabilize causing mood swings, anxiety, brain fog, and memory loss.

Symptoms usually appear after physical or emotional trauma but a trigger is not always evident. It is diagnosed when there is widespread pain throughout the body for a minimum of 3 months, and when pressure is applied to 11 out of 18 specific body sites.

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine offer pain relief for the body, emotional balance for the heart, and mental clarity for the mind. According to acupuncture and Chinese medicine, pain is seen as a disruption to the flow of Qi within the body. This is best expressed in the Chinese saying: "Bu tong ze tong, tong ze bu tong" which means "free flow: no pain, no free flow: pain." The disruption that presents as fibromyalgia is often associated with disharmony of the Liver, Spleen, Kidney and Heart systems.

Chinese medicine focuses on treating each individual based on their constitution, emotional state, the intensity and location of their pain, digestive health, sleeping patterns, and an array of other symptoms. Treatment often includes a combination of Chinese medicine modalities, including acupuncture.

Are you suffering from fibromyalgia? Acupuncture may be what you've been looking for to ease your symptoms and reclaim your health and vitality. Call to schedule your appointment today!

Use Self-Acupressure to Relieve Fibromyalgia Symptoms

For anyone suffering from fibromyalgia, knowing where to apply self-acupressure may help ease some of the symptoms associated with the disorder. It is important to recognize that psychological stresses can play

a significant role in the presentation of fibromyalgia. Employing self-acupressure can help one regain emotional well-being and better control the onset of symptoms.

For best self-acupressure results, apply gentle yet firm pressure from your middle-finger as you make tiny circular motions. This may be done as little as once a day or as much as once every hour.

Here are a few areas self-acupressure can be applied to provide symptom relief:

Yintang - located between the eyes, at the level of the eyebrows. This point is renowned for its ability to soothe anxiety and promote a general relaxation of the body. Stimulation of this point may help with obsessive and unproductive thoughts.

Ear Shen Men - located on the upper portion of the ear in the triangular fossa, nearly a perfect fit to gently place a fingertip and press. The name of this point speaks for itself, stimulation here brings the potential for great relief from any kind of physical and/or emotional pain, metaphorically allowing the patient to enter "heaven."

Ren 17 - located in the center of the chest at the level of the fourth intercostal space, at the same level as the nipples. This is a great point to help relieve the sensation of rising anxiety and help the body physically relax as well.

Pericardium 6 - located on the side of the arm, four finger widths from the wrist crease and between the two tendons in the middle of the arm. Gentle pressing can help promote a sense of well-being and relief from nausea.

Stomach 36 - located about four finger widths down from the outer eye of the knee, then over about the width of the middle finger from the shin bone. This invaluable point is known for its ability to promote general wellness by stimulating the immune system, stopping pain anywhere in the body and calming the shen. "Calming the shen" refers to the stabilization of negative mental and emotional states.

To learn more about self-acupressure for your specific symptoms of fibromyalgia, call to make an appointment.

Study Recommends Acupuncture for Fibromyalgia Pain

The study "Fibromyalgia syndrome treated with acupuncture at the acupoints of the affected meridians and heavy moxibustion at painful points: a randomized, controlled trial," published in the February 2016 issue of *Zhongguo Zhen Jiu*, yielded positive results.

The acupuncture/moxibustion (AM) group underwent treatments every other day, for a total of 4 weeks. The drug therapy group (DT) took their prescribed medications everyday, also for a total of 4 weeks. Before and after every treatment, researchers determined the patient's level of pain using the visual analog scale (VAS) and the revised fibromyalgia impact questionnaire (FIQR). Both the VAS and FIQR were completed 4 weeks post-treatment.

Although there was a decrease in pain for both groups during the test period—only the AM group maintained a remarkable drop in pain levels 1 month after the study completed. Researchers recommend the use of acupuncture to manage pain associated with fibromyalgia. Long term, it is more effective than drug therapy, with little to no adverse effects.

Source: Li D, Yang L, Li J. (2016). Fibromyalgia syndrome treated with acupuncture at the acupoints of the affected meridians and heavy moxibustion at painful points: a randomized, controlled trial. Zhongguo Zhen Jiu. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27348913>.

5 Tools for Symptom Relief

Although fibromyalgia is a disorder that can be disabling for many due to chronic widespread pain and fatigue, there are some things you can do to alleviate the symptoms and improve your overall quality of life.

Learn and Practice Stress Reduction Techniques

Chronic stress can lead to fatigue, depression, a weakened immune system, and a host of serious physical and psychological ailments.

When under stress, your muscles contract and tense affecting nerves, blood vessels, organs, skin and bones. Chronically-tense muscles can result in a variety of musculoskeletal conditions and disorders, including muscle spasms and pain.

While it isn't always possible to remove the external forces causing stress, the ability to effectively deal with stress is a choice. Take time for yourself and cultivate the energy you need to handle your stress more effectively.

Eat a Well-Balanced Diet

Managing your diet may seem time-consuming, but the benefits it offers make it worthwhile. Many fibromyalgia sufferers find relief through a properly-managed diet.

Make sure you are including nutrients in your diet shown to combat nerve sensitivities, improve cognition, boost the immune system, and reduce swelling.

Exercise

While even basic movements may be painful, exercise helps restore strength and endurance. Tai Chi, Qi Gong or Yoga are great for easy stretches, careful strengthening, deep breathing, as well as relaxation techniques.

Gentle stretching will clear tension that builds when muscles tighten and will improve overall circulation. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

Meditate

The practice of meditation is a proven stress-reducer that helps the body create a sense of calm and a continuing sense of well being. While 15 minutes daily is recommended, even 5 or 10 minutes can have a powerful effect on your day.

Restorative Sleep

Get at least 8 hours of restorative sleep. Maintain a routine sleep schedule and make your bedroom a sanctuary from everyday stress.

Practicing good sleep hygiene will give your body an opportunity to get stronger and heal.
