

## Acupuncture for Arthritis

### Acupuncture for Arthritis

Arthritis is one of the most pervasive diseases in the United States and is the leading cause of disability. According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention one out every three Americans (an estimated 70 million people) is affected.

For most 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. Joints naturally degenerate over time. Fortunately, arthritis can often be managed with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

Arthritis isn't just 1 disease; it's a complex disorder that comprises more than 100 distinct conditions and can affect people at any stage of life. Two of the most common forms are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. While these 2 forms of arthritis have very different causes, risk factors, and effects on the body, they often share a common symptom-persistent joint pain.

**Osteoarthritis (OA)** is most common form of arthritis in the United States, affecting an estimated 21 million adults. OA begins with the breakdown of joint cartilage, resulting in pain and stiffness.

OA commonly affects the joints of the fingers, knees, hips, and spine. Other joints affected less frequently include the wrists, elbows, shoulders, and ankles. When OA is found in a less

frequently affected joint, there is usually a history of injury on affected joint, there is usual stress to that joint. Work-related repetitive injury and physical trauma may contribute to the development of OA. If you have a strenuous job that requires repetitive bending, kneeling or squatting, for example, you may be at high risk for OA of the knee.

**Rheumatoid arthritis (RA)** can affect many different joints and, in some people, other parts of the body as well, including the blood, the lungs, and the heart. Inflammation of the joint lining, called the synovium, can cause pain, stiffness, swelling, warmth, and redness. The affected joint may also lose its shape, resulting in loss of normal movement. RA can last a long time and can be a disease of flares (active symptoms) and remissions (few to no symptoms).

#### Diagnosis and Treatment of Arthritis with Acupuncture

According to Chinese medical theory, arthritis arises when cyclical flow of Qi in the meridians becomes blocked. This blockage is called; “Bi” type pain is widely studied and successfully treated using a combination of acupuncture and/or Chinese herbs.

Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine have been found to be extremely effective at treating the pain and inflammation associated with all types of arthritis. The acupuncture points and herbs that are used depend on if the blockage of Qi (arthritis) is caused by the pathogen wind, cold, damp or damp-heat.

Traditional Chinese Medicine does not recognize arthritis as

one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques such as acupuncture, Chinese herbs, bodywork, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 10 patients are treated with Oriental medicine for joints pain, each of these 10 patients will receive a unique, customized treatment with different acupuncture points, different herbs and different lifestyle and diet recommendations.

Acupuncture points to treat Arthritis are located all over the body, not just directly over the affected area. During the acupuncture treatment, tiny needles could be placed along your legs, arms, shoulders, and perhaps even your ears and toes.

There seems to be little sensitivity to the insertion of acupuncture needles. Occasionally, there is brief moments of discomfort ad the needle penetrates the skin, but once the needles are in place, most people relax and even fall asleep for the duration of the treatment.

The length, number and frequency of treatments will vary. Typical treatments last from fifteen to thirty minutes, with the patient being treated one or two times a week. Some symptoms are relieved after the first treatment, while more severe or chronic ailments often require multiple treatments.

#### Lifestyle and Dietary Instructions

Your diet plays a crucial role in helping you avoid or control arthritis. The first objective of a healthy diet is to help you lose

weight if you are overweight. Being overweight can cause additional stress to your joints.

The second way a balanced, varied diet can help ease the pain of arthritis is by providing vitamins and minerals that keep your joints healthy and avoiding “damp” foods such as dairy products and greasy or spicy foods.

If you have arthritis or knee or hip pain, vitamin C and vitamin D can help prevent bone and cartilage destruction. And a multivitamin can help ensure that you always get the nutrition you need.

Here are some other healthy (and delicious) choices to include in your diet.

**Ginger** - A natural anti-inflammatory, available as powdered extracts in capsules as well as alcohol based extracts. Follow the dosing directions on the label. Or make tea by combining one-half teaspoon of grated ginger root with eight 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. Cherries-Recent research has shown that tart cherries are an excellent source of nutrients that may help to reduce joint pain and inflammation related to arthritis.

**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. If you don't care for fish, consider supplementing your diet with fish oil capsules.

**Turmeric** - Another natural anti-inflammatory. Look for an extract of whole turmeric, in healthy-food stores; follow the dosage directions on the label.