

Health WellNews

FALL has arrived...

Acupuncture and Fatigue

Fatigue is defined as extreme tiredness, usually resulting from physical or mental exertion or illness. For most people, their bodies are programmed to be tired at night and alert during the day. However, work, family and other responsibilities frequently require that we ignore these innate programs and interrupt our natural sleep patterns. Statistics show that nearly 43 percent of all people in the workforce report being fatigued on a daily basis. This can ultimately lead to illness, accidents and even death. Fatigue is no joke and needs to be addressed.

Conventional medicine treats chronic fatigue with prescription medications, and while this may work for some, for many others it becomes an addiction. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) offers a better alternative. TCM is a medical system that has been around for nearly 3,000 years. It utilizes multiple modalities to treat fatigue, including acupuncture, moxibustion, herbal formulas and nutrition. To determine the right treatment, a diagnosis must be made first.

TCM diagnosing is quite different from conventional medicine. Eastern Medicine considers the whole person when diagnosing and treating. TCM

looks at the patient holistically, considering all aspects, including the mind, the body and the environment of the person. Diagnosis of a person includes inspection and observance of the expressions, colors, appearance, smells and any idiosyncrasies that may be present.

TCM also looks at the patient's tongue and pulses on both wrists. These two practices are the primary diagnostic tools used in TCM. The tongue and pulses can reveal quite a bit of information about what is going on internally. Different areas of the tongue correspond to body systems and energetic pathways. For example, the tip of the tongue can show irregularities related to the heart and the mind. The rear of the tongue can show irregularities related to the urinary bladder and kidneys and is associated with the emotion of fear. The pulse is also broken down into six locations, three on each side, all of which correspond to a body system and the related energetic pathway.

With fatigue and TCM, there are multiple possible diagnoses, including energy deficiency, blood deficiency, phlegm / dampness accumulation, liver energy stagnation, etc. Each one of these patterns has their own unique symptoms, but they all have one thing in common: feelings of fatigue. While there is not enough time to discuss all of the aforementioned patterns, some of the symptoms can include poor digestion,



dizziness, shortness of breath, vision issues, mood swings, irritability, depression, chronic coughing, sinus conditions, poor concentration and mental fogginess.

The modalities mentioned before, such as acupuncture, can help bring balance back into the body, thus correcting the symptoms and alleviating fatigue, over time. Moxibustion can warm the energetic pathways and help remove excessive phlegm accumulation in the body. Herbal formulas can treat any host of symptoms, as can proper nutrition, all of which will most likely be used by the seasoned TCM professional.

If you or somebody you know is suffering from fatigue, contact a licensed acupuncturist in your area. They can walk you through the diagnosis and treatment process and help you get back on the road to recovery.



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7 Ways Acupuncture Can Help With Running Injuries

Running is something that people do to keep their bodies healthy. But as with any physical activity, there can be pitfalls to avoid. When it comes to runners, things like sprains, strains, aches and pains are all too common. And they usually involve the ankles, knees or legs because those are the tools that runners use.

For most minor running injuries, some rest and heat or ice can be helpful. But occasionally there are issues that just don't seem to go away and can impede a runner's ability to train and get back on track. Things like plantar fasciitis, patellofemoral syndrome (aka "runner's knee") and sciatica are all issues that may take more than just some rest to correct. This is where modalities like acupuncture can be very beneficial.

Acupuncture is a component of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) that involves inserting hair-thin needles into the skin at specific points, which when stimulated, promote the body's natural ability to heal itself. And while most runners seek out acupuncture as a way to treat an ache, pain or injury, many find that regular acupuncture treatments can actually improve their running by restoring balance and energy throughout the body. Here are seven ways that acupuncture can help with running injuries.

1 Acupuncture **reduces inflammation**. Inflammation is common to running injuries. Inflammation is typically caused by trauma or repetitive motion to the area. Inflammation occurs when cortisol levels are elevated and studies show that acupuncture can decrease cortisol levels very effectively, thus decreasing inflammation.

2 Acupuncture **decreases swelling**. Swelling is another common symptom of running injuries. It occurs when increased movement of fluid and white blood cells rush to the area that is inflamed. The swelling can remain for several days. But specific acupuncture points can actually help decrease the swelling, restoring proper fluid circulation to the injured area, also decreasing the time it takes to heal.

3 Acupuncture **promotes circulation**. When the injured area is swollen and inflamed, proper circulation of blood and other bodily fluids will be limited. Specific acupoints have been shown to increase circulation throughout the body. And by placing needles around the affected area, it signals the body to send healing to that targeted area.

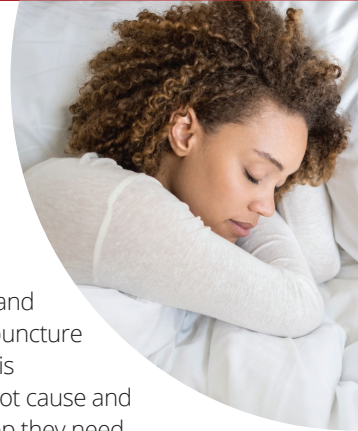
4 Acupuncture can **correct muscle imbalances**. When muscles become imbalanced, they can cause a chain reaction that results in muscle, tendon and joint pain. By utilizing motor points in the affected muscles, a release is elicited and the muscle can return to its correct position, which decreases stress on the injured area.

5 Acupuncture **improves sleep**. For runners, with or without injuries, sleep is vital. In order to be strong as a runner, the body needs time to heal in between each run. The CDC reports that nearly 10 percent of all Americans suffer from chronic insomnia and this includes runners. The benefit of acupuncture versus a sleeping pill is that acupuncture is customized to the person, treating the root cause and allowing the runner to get the quality sleep they need.

6 Acupuncture **relieves pain**. Runners tend to be very health conscious and taking pain relievers can come with some not so healthy side effects that can impede the runner's ability to perform. Acupuncture relieves pain very effectively with no negative side effects. Acupuncture helps the nervous system produce painkilling chemicals and studies have confirmed this, which is why the World Health Organization endorses acupuncture for pain relief.

7 Acupuncture can **relieve chronic stress**. Stress of any kind, emotional or physical, can undermine the performance of a runner and cause all kinds of health issues. A recent study at Georgetown University showed that acupuncture suppressed stress-related hormone production and the effects lasted for up to four days. Think about that when you're training.

If you're one of the many weekend warriors and backyard athletes that use running as your release, then having a licensed acupuncturist on speed dial, might be a great way for you to stay healthy. Give it a try. You might be pleasantly surprised how amazing you feel in as little as one to two treatments.



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Auricular Acupuncture: What it is and why is everyone talking about it?

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is a medical system that dates back **nearly 3,000 years**. Auricular acupuncture was first mentioned around 500 B.C. in the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine, which is the equivalent of the Bible for TCM practitioners. However, the method in which auricular acupuncture is practiced today is actually based upon discoveries that occurred in France in the 1950's. Modern auricular acupuncture comes from the work done by Dr. Paul Nogier.

Auricular acupuncture is the stimulation of the external ear for the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions. These health conditions may be anywhere in the body. The acupuncture points can be simulated manually, with an acupuncture needle, with a laser, magnets or ear seeds. Regardless of the means of stimulation, auricular acupuncture can be a very powerful addition to regular acupuncture treatments.

The current form of auricular acupuncture came about after Dr. Paul Nogier noticed a scar on the upper ear of some of his patients. When he inquired about the scar, he found out a local practitioner had been treating his patients for sciatica pain and she was cauterizing this specific area on the external ear to relieve their low back pain. Dr. Nogier conducted similar tests on his own patients and found their low back pain was also relieved. He tried using



other means of stimulation as well, such as acupuncture needles and found it to be just as effective as cauterizing the area.

Dr. Nogier theorized that if an area of the upper external ear is effective on treating low back pain, then perhaps other areas of the ear could treat other parts of the body. His hypothesis led to the model used today for teaching auricular acupuncture. The ear is thought to represent the whole anatomical body. However, it is upside down in orientation, so the head is represented by the lower ear lobe, the feet are at the top of the ear and the rest of the body is in between. The Chinese actually adopted Dr. Nogier's model of auricular acupuncture in 1958.

Auricular acupuncture is considered a microsystem, meaning one part of the body, the ear in this case, is a microcosm of the whole body. Microsystems also appear on foot and hand reflexology, facial acupuncture and scalp acupuncture.

This system has been practiced in Asia, albeit in a different form, for over 2,000 years.

Auricular acupuncture has been used in Europe for the past 40 to 50 years, and it is finally starting to take root in the United States. Over the past five to 10 years, the U.S. military has started using auricular acupuncture for its personnel in the battlefield. This

form of battlefield acupuncture is used to help soldiers deal with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) brought on by being in combat.

Since auricular acupuncture allows for every part of the external ear to connect through the microsystem to every part of the body, many conditions can be treated using only a few very tiny needles. Not only can PTSD be treated using auricular acupuncture, but also things like chronic pain, drug addiction, high blood pressure and nausea. And for those who are a little needle-shy, auricular acupuncture is a great way to treat them, because it uses smaller-gauge needles, so small in fact, they're barely visible. Auricular acupuncture can be used alone or in conjunction with other forms of acupuncture.



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Two Acupuncture Case Studies:

Understanding pain due to stagnation and a treatment plan for back pain due to deficiency.

A TCM stagnation diagnosis, explained:

The process of recovering from a sprained ankle offers a simple illustration of how stagnation plays out in the body. At the onset of injury, the ankle becomes acutely painful, stiff, swollen and hot.

This involves damp, heat, blood and Qi types of stagnation. After the initial swelling and redness subside, and as the blood and lymph clear the inflammatory cells from the tissue, the ankle is still painful, weak and stiff; heat, blood and Qi stagnation remain.

If the injury is left to heal itself, often an extra few layers of connective tissue will reinforce the injured tendons and ligaments, creating a physical accumulation of tissue around part of the ankle. As the heat and pain subside, the weakness, stiffness, and extra tissue linger, as Qi, blood and phlegm stagnation respectively.

Finally with regular activity the stiffness subsides and all that is left is a slightly weaker ankle. Ideally the extra tissue will have slowly been redistributed; however, this often lingers and although mostly healed, this tendon still exhibits the deepest level of stagnation, the phlegm type which still involves blood and Qi stagnation. This means whenever this ankle is exposed to cold, damp or systemic inflammation, the tissue involved in the phlegm stagnation can become painful and "re-activated." This is why an old injury can suddenly "flare up" without injuring it directly.

In order to diminish the possibility of re-injuring or having a flare up of an old injury, it is important to get rid of this lingering phlegm stagnation as thoroughly as possible with acupuncture, physical therapy and topical herbal plasters and soaks.

How does TCM treat back pain due to deficiency?

For cases of pain due to deficiency, Qi and/or blood flow to an injury are restricted or the nutrient-density of the blood is compromised. In this case, acupuncture itself must be applied in a very gentle, almost superficial way in order to avoid further exhausting the remaining resources in the tissues. The focus in these cases is to use very gentle localized treatment approaches such as light cupping or gua sha to increase blood flow, combined with acupuncture and Chinese herbal formulas to help support the mitochondrial health, nutritional health and neurological health of the entire body.

Topical herbal treatments are especially important in this case as well, since in many cases of deficiency the body is not processing food optimally and consequently anything having to be metabolized by the digestive system may not be as potent as it could be. To circumvent this problem, Chinese herbal medicine uses the ability of biochemical compounds to move transdermally to their advantage.

Chinese medical herbalists have created many topical liniments (alcohol-based herbal tinctures to be applied topically), balms (oil-based herbal infused salves), plasters, soaks/compresses and individual herbal prescriptions for topical application.

Nutrition is key in cases of blood deficiency, and identifying any ways your body is not metabolizing the food it is given will assist with rebuilding the blood. If one eats an iron-rich diet but is unable to properly metabolize iron, this problem must be addressed first.



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