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Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine for Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) affects an estimated 2 percent of the population. Fibromyalgia is characterized by chronic widespread pain, a heightened and painful response to pressure, insomnia, fatigue, memory loss, mood swings, digestive problems and depression. Anyone who is female or has a family history of fibromyalgia or a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or rheumatic disease (i.e. lupus) has an increased risk for the disorder.



Symptoms often begin after a physical or emotional trauma, but in many cases there appears to be no triggering event. It is diagnosed when there is a history of widespread pain in all four quadrants of the body for a minimum duration of three months. To aid in diagnosis, there is a map of 18 specific points on the body prone to pain. To qualify for an official diagnosis of fibromyalgia, a patient must experience pain in 11 out of the 18 sites when pressure is applied.

While not all affected persons experience all associated symptoms, the following symptoms commonly occur together -- chronic pain, debilitating fatigue, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, depression, joint stiffness, chronic headaches, dryness, hypersensitivity, inability to concentrate (called "fibro fog"), incontinence, irritable bowel syndrome, numbness, tingling or poor circulation in the hands and feet, painful menstrual cramps or restless legs syndrome.

Research shows that up to 90 percent of people with fibromyalgia have turned to complementary or alternative medicine to manage their symptoms. Acupuncture, in particular, has become a popular treatment choice and has been shown to be an effective treatment for fibromyalgia.

According to acupuncture and Oriental medicine, pain is seen as a disruption of the flow of Qi within the body. The disruption that results in fibromyalgia is usually associated with disharmonies of the Liver, Spleen, Kidney and Heart systems. The Oriental medicine theory of pain is expressed in this famous Chinese saying: "Bu tong ze tong, tong ze bu tong" which means "free flow: no pain, no free flow: pain."

Oriental medicine aims to treat the symptoms unique to each individual depending on their constitution, emotional state, the intensity and location of their pain, digestive health, sleeping patterns and an array of other signs and symptoms. A treatment program often includes a combination of Oriental medicine modalities, including acupuncture.

If you have fibromyalgia, acupuncture and Oriental medicine 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. The most common tell-tale symptom of fibromyalgia is widespread body pain. Although each patient may describe their pain with different terms like dull, achy, piercing or burning, the one commonality between them is the constant, unrelenting experience of discomfort.

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.

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5 Tools for Fibromyalgia 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

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.

Fight Fibromyalgia with Nutrient Dense Foods

The National Fibromyalgia Association recommends a balanced diet containing nutrient dense foods free of artificial additives and sweeteners to help your body fight fibromyalgia syndrome.

Some key nutrients to include are:

B-Complex

Found in whole grains, beans, nuts, chicken, fish and eggs; B-complex vitamins directly influence the nervous system's proper functioning and combat nerve problems such as tingling and tenderness.

Magnesium

Found in nuts, grains, beans, fish, meat and dark green vegetables magnesium is needed for muscle flexibility and bone, protein and fatty acid formation. Magnesium is also integral in making new cells, relaxing muscles, clotting blood, aiding in calcium absorption and activating B vitamins.

Omega 3

Directly affecting cellular function, this fatty acid found in fish minimizes nerve sensitivity and improves cognition.

Vitamin C

Helps combat stress, builds the immune system and reduces swelling. Vitamin C is found in a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables including citrus fruits, green vegetables, tomatoes and berries.

Water

Increases circulation of oxygen and nutrients throughout the body and helps to eliminate waste.



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 eight 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.

Study Supports Acupuncture for Fibromyalgia Relief

The British Columbia Medical Journal (BCMJ) published a revealing study investigating the effectiveness of using acupuncture plus counseling to treat symptoms of fibromyalgia.

Twenty female patients with an average age of 46 underwent twice-weekly acupuncture sessions for 12 weeks. They also received counseling sessions to learn more about nutrition and stress management to cope with their disease. All study participants received the same acupuncture points during their treatments. At the end of the trial, researchers evaluated the progress of each patient.

Seven of the participants showed significant progress in dealing with their symptoms. This group experienced a 50% or higher improvement in their personal evaluations of pain and other symptoms. One patient even reported a 78% improvement. Ten patients declared a moderate improvement, between 21-50%, while only three patients reported minor progress, between 10-12%. Thus researchers concluded the efficacy of using acupuncture combined with counseling for reducing the symptoms of fibromyalgia.

Source: Clarke T. Treatment of fibromyalgia with acupuncture and counseling. BCMJ, 2004;46:1 21-23
Retrieved online at <http://www.bcmj.org/article/treatment-fibromyalgia-acupuncture-and-counseling>

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