

Breathe Better with Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine

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November is COPD Awareness Month & Lung Cancer Awareness Month so I thought I would talk a bit about how acupuncture and Chinese medicine can help with both chronic and acute lung conditions. The acupuncture may not “cure” COPD or lung cancer, but it can greatly reduce symptoms and slow down the progression of the disease. Acupuncture & Chinese medicine is also very helpful in the treatment of asthma, bronchitis, and even the common cold.

The lungs are vitally important in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), as they are, along with the Spleen, responsible for generating the Qi (vital energy of the body) from the air we breathe and the food we eat. If your lungs are compromised, there is a high probability that you are also Qi deficient. This means that you don't have enough energy to optimally perform all of your bodily functions.

The lung, from a Chinese perspective, is a delicate organ and can be easily attacked by external pathogens such as heat or cold. The function of the lungs are to control breathing, dispersing the Qi to affect the skin and body hair, and descending the Qi to regulate the water passages. The lungs open into the nose, which makes them important in the treatment of allergies. The lungs are also related to the emotional state of sadness, and unresolved grief can cause a chronic cough or other lung issues.

We can diagnose lung issues in two ways. First, if we are going to treat using acupuncture, we would diagnosis the “sick” meridians and then use that information to decide what points will be used. The “sick” meridians are the ones that flow through the lungs. The three main meridians that go through the lungs are the Kidney, the Stomach, and the Spleen meridians. The treatment strategy for this diagnosis would be to use acupuncture points on the Heart, Large Intestine and Lung meridians which would be found on the wrist and forearm.

If you have had lung issues for a long time or if your issues are severe, herbs may be suggested to help build you up so that you are stronger. The acupuncture yields better results if you have better Qi, or vital energy in the body. It is difficult to move energy that is not present. Herbs and certain foods can be helpful in this regard.



If we choose to use herbs, we will also determine what your zang-fu diagnosis is. This diagnosis is necessary to determine what lung pattern is present so we can choose the correct herbal formula. Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine differ significantly in our diagnostics. Western medicine gives a label such as COPD whereas TCM breaks down the lung issue into either Lung Qi deficiency, Lung Yin deficiency, invasion of lung by pathogenic cold, invasion of lung by pathogenic heat, or invasion of lung by pathogenic dryness.

Lung Qi deficiency is a manifestation of low lung Qi. It is usually caused by chronic cough or asthma which damages the lung Qi. The chief symptoms of lung Qi deficiency is a feeble or weak cough and or asthma accompanied by a thin, white phlegm, shortness of breath which is worse upon exertion, quiet voice, fatigue especially when exercising, spontaneous sweating, aversion to the cold, and a pale face.

Lung yin deficiency often results from a prolonged cough which injures the lung yin. Anytime there is yin deficiency, heat symptoms are present which can then lead to dryness as well. The main symptoms are a chronic dry cough with little or no phlegm, dry mouth and throat, afternoon fever, red cheeks in the afternoon, night sweating, fatigue and possibly weight loss.

Invasion of the lung by pathogenic cold is caused by cold invading the body and accumulating in the lung. The main symptoms of this are a strong, spasmodic cough, asthma, thin and white sputum, chills, absence of thirst, aversion to the cold, and possibly headaches and/or body aches.

Invasion of the lung by pathogenic heat is caused by pathogenic heat invading the body and accumulating in the lung. Some symptoms include cough, asthma, yellow, sticky phlegm, increased thirst, sore throat, feverish feeling, aversion to heat, chest pain, and possibly constipation and/or concentrated urine.

The final possible lung diagnosis is invasion of the lung by pathogenic dryness. This is an acute condition and is not applied to chronic lung issues. This is often seen in the fall season. Acute symptoms of this include a dry cough with little sputum or the sputum is too sticky to cough up and out, dry nose and throat, chest pain, and a fast pulse.

During the treatment, the lungs should feel more open and expand more to allow deeper breaths. Anxiety about not being able to breathe decreases and you will feel your body start to relax.

At Acupuncture & Natural Health Solutions, we can help you to breathe better. Call today, 239-260-4566, to take your first step toward better quality of life.



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