

For Drug-Free Treatment of Arthritis, Try Acupuncture

By Toni Eatros, MS, Dipl Ac, AP

Do you suffer from arthritis? Are your joints swollen and painful, keeping you from enjoying the activities that you love? If so, I have good news for you. Acupuncture can alleviate the pain you are experiencing and help you get back to living the life that you love. Pain relief usually begins after the first few treatments, sometimes, even the first treatment.

There are two types of arthritis, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Osteoarthritis typically affects the large, weight bearing joints of the body, such as the knees, hips and back. Osteoarthritis is a degenerative disease and most elderly people have it to some degree. Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease that is seen in people of all ages and is often associated with an allergic response in the body.

Arthritis is a subset of a condition that the Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners call "Bi Syndrome". This translates to a blockage of energy in the body, which presents as numbness, tingling, and/or pain in the area where the blockage occurs. If these symptoms are present, then obstruction of energy is present.

There are two main causes for arthritis, from a Traditional Chinese Medicine perspective. The first is from prolonged exposure of the body to extreme environmental elements, such as cold, dampness, and wind. The second is arthritis due to accumulated heat in the joints. Regardless of the cause, eventually all arthritis changes to heat accumulation over the long term.

Arthritis can be further differentiated into three types of "Bi" or blockages. The first type is called "painful bi" or "tong bi", it is caused by prolonged exposure to cold. The pain associated with this type of arthritis is severe or stabbing pain that improves with application of heat and worsens with exposure to the cold. The second type is called "fixed bi" or "zhuo bi". This type is caused by prolonged exposure to wet/damp weather. The pain is characterized by marked soreness, numbness, and heaviness in and



around the joints. This pain is worse on cloudy and rainy days. Coffee, chocolate, and sweets also make this type of arthritis worse. The last type of blockage is called "heat bi" or "re bi". The affected joints are often red, swollen and painful.

The color of the tongue can indicate the severity of the arthritis. A purple tongue indicates a milder arthritis than a blue tongue, which indicates more severe pain. The pulse usually feels tight and wiry under the fingers.

The affected meridians are diagnosed and treatment with acupuncture, massage, cupping, heat lamp, and/or herbs begins. The mirroring and imaging format is used to select the appropriate points. The arthritic joints will not be needled, rather, distal points are used. For instance, to treat the knee, the acupuncture needles would be inserted into the opposite elbow. Acupressure is used to identify tender or sensitive areas on the corresponding areas of the opposite elbow. These tender areas are where the needles are inserted. This approach makes each treatment unique, it is rare that exactly the same points are used from treatment to treatment.

The needles are stimulated periodically over the course of about 45 minutes. Soft lighting and music play, patients become profoundly relaxed during the course of the treatment. Depending on the exact circumstances of your pain, stretching, massage, moxibustion or electro-acupuncture may be used in addition to the acupuncture. Instructions about home self-treatment will be given as well.

Treatment results vary depending on the length of time the pain has been present, overall health, the severity of degeneration of the joint and the ability to rest the joint between treatments. Most patients see a dramatic reduction during the very first treatment. The longer and more severe the arthritis is, the longer it takes to correct the imbalance.

In most cases, 6-12 treatments are recommended. The best results are seen when treatments are given 3 times per week for the first two weeks, then as needed for maintenance. If the joint is rested and if the suggested home treatment is performed, results can be fast and long lasting, so you can resume your pursuit of the activities you enjoy. Extremely active people may find they need to come biweekly or monthly for maintenance treatments to keep the pain from returning.



Get relief from arthritis today, call (239) 260-4566 to schedule an appointment. For more information and answers to frequently asked questions, please visit www.AcupunctureSolutionsOnline.com.

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