

ASTHMA

How Acupuncture Helps



Asthma is a long-term condition that affects more than 20 million Americans. Caring for a chronic condition such as asthma can sometimes be frustrating, but it's important to remember that it can be controlled. Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) can be powerful allies in the management of asthma, and they work well in conjunction with other types of treatment.

The Facts About Asthma Asthma is an inflammatory disease

Quick facts:

You are a key part of controlling your asthma. Here are a few ways you can take an active part in your treatment:

- Try keeping an asthma diary to track your specific asthma triggers.
- Be sure to keep all of your health care providers fully informed. This includes talking to them about any medications or herbs you may be taking, as well as any changes in your symptoms.
- Follow your practitioner's recommendations for self-care.

in which the airways become blocked or narrowed, causing symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. Some people have long periods without symptoms, while others may always experience difficulty breathing. Asthma attacks occur when something triggers the inflammation of the respiratory

system. Flare ups can be severe—sometimes even life-threatening.

Asthma attacks are generally caused by one or more triggers, such as:

- A cold, flu, bronchitis, or sinus infection
- Allergens including dust mites, tree and grass pollen, mold, and animal dander
- Irritants that include tobacco smoke, strong fragrances, and air pollution
- Certain foods and food additives
- Aspirin and anti-inflammatory drugs
- Strenuous exercise
- Change in weather
- Strong emotions such as anxiety, stress, grief and anger

Generally, the available approach of asthma treatment is to try and prevent attacks. This is usually done with regular use of anti-inflammatory medications, inhaled steroids and leukotriene inhibitors. Once an asthma attack is underway, quick-acting medications like corticosteroids may be able to relieve it.

Most of these medications can cause side effects such as nausea, headaches, muscle tremors, and insomnia. However, many people have found that acupuncture treatment can help reduce asthma attacks, improve lung function, and even lower the amount of medication needed.

A holistic treatment Asthma, according to ancient principles in TCM, is known as “Xiao Chuan,” which means “wheezing” and “shortness of breath.” Asthma is caused by a variety of factors that involve an imbalance with Wei Qi (pronounced “way chee”), and an imbalance with one or more of the organ systems, generally the lungs, spleen or kidney.

An acupuncturist will take a holistic, or whole-body approach in order to determine what areas of the body are affected and out-of-balance and contributing to the attacks.

Since acupuncture and TCM take into account your overall well being, your practitioner may also address other issues that may be contributing to your asthma, such as exercise, diet and stress. Acupuncture is a safe, effective, and pain-free approach to many conditions, and you may find that your overall health improves along with your asthma symptoms.

Asthma according to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) goes beyond a simple diagnosis of “asthma.”

Below are some of the more common TCM diagnoses that your acupuncturist may discover and treat.

- Invasion of Wind
- Lung weakness
- Kidney weakness
- Spleen weakness
- Liver imbalance
- Liver Heat
- Wei Qi deficiency
- Phlegm/damp in the lungs

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