



Whole Family Health

Winter 2009

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In the News: Acupuncture beats aspirin for chronic headache

More promising research on acupuncture and headache appeared in the journal *Anesthesia and Analgesia* this December. Researchers at Duke University reviewed studies involving nearly 4,000 patients with migraine, tension headache and other forms of chronic headache. Research showed that 62% of the acupuncture patients reported headache relief, compared to 45% of people taking medications.

The lead author of the study, Dr. Tong Joo Gan, had this to say, "Acupuncture is becoming a favorable option for a variety of purposes, ranging from enhancing fertility to decreasing post-operative pain, because people experience significantly fewer side effects and it can be less expensive than other options."

For a TCM perspective on headache, as well as acupressure points you can try at home, check out the Fall 2008 Whole Family Health Newsletter, available online at www.wholefamilyacupuncture.com/newsletter/

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Exercise for PMS, Depression and Anxiety: A TCM Perspective

Many women have read that exercise can improve premenstrual symptoms, depression and anxiety. Dr. Jerilynn C. Prior, professor of endocrinology at the University of British Columbia, has conducted several studies on the role of exercise in improving PMS symptoms. She hypothesizes that exercise may help with symptoms because of the mood-enhancing effect of physical activity, but she also believes that “exercise alters something in the hypothalamus, probably the core body temperature, that signals the pituitary gland and ovaries to bring a woman’s system more into balance.”

Exercise is also of major benefit for people suffering from exercise and anxiety. Research into this link suggest there may be a variety of reasons that exercise enhances mood. “[Exercise] raises the levels of certain mood-enhancing neurotransmitters in the brain. Exercise may also boost feel-good endorphins, release muscle tension, help you sleep better, and reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol. It also increases body temperature, which may have calming effects.”

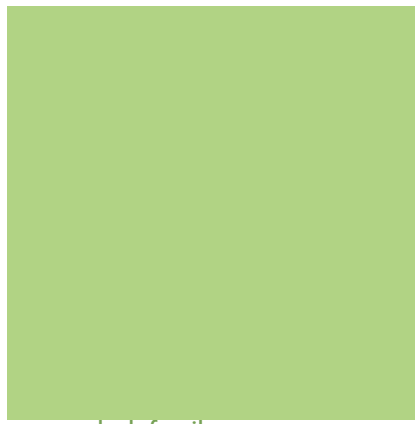
From a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) perspective, a main component of PMS and depression is something called “qi stagnation”. When qi (energy) moves smoothly through the acupuncture channels, your body feels good and your mood is good. Symptoms of qi stagnation include pain, depressed mood, and digestive complaints. A really great way to move qi (besides acupuncture) is exercise.

For women with PMS, their complaint is “I feel awful when I have PMS. How am I suppose to exercise?” During a woman’s cycle, she is most stagnant in the week before her period. Start exercising at the beginning of your premenstrual week to move qi, before bloating and cramps set in. Once your period starts, give yourself a few days break to rest.

Gou Qi Zi Tea

Steep a large handful of gou qi zi (goji berries) in a quart of hot water. Cool slightly and drink as tea throughout the day. Once the berries are rehydrated, feel free to snack on them as well.

Goji berries can be found at many health food stores and even in the natural food aisles of some grocery stores. They are great to cook with in stir fries and soups.



The Fountain of Youth

Gou qi zi, or goji berries, are both a food and a medicinal herb. This small red berry, usually found dried in health food stores or the natural food aisle, is an ingredient in health and longevity teas in China. It is sweet and has the function of tonifying the liver and kidney and nourishing yin, blood and essence. It is also beneficial for the eyes.

There is a story about gou qi zi told in China that illustrates its use as a beauty elixir. A man walking down a country road encountered two women, one young and one old, arguing with each other. He approached them and admonished the younger woman for talking so disrespectfully to her elder. The young woman laughed heartily and said, "But that old woman is my daughter!" Her secret? The mother drank gou qi zi tea daily and the daughter did not.