

Acupuncture for Common Skin Condition

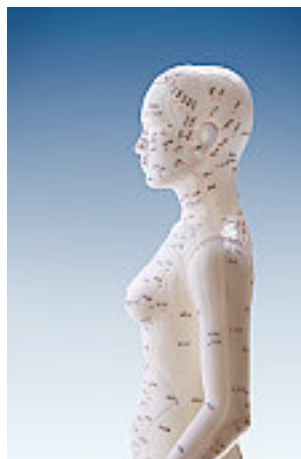
Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be very effective at treating skin conditions. Treatments can provide quick relief for acute symptoms and can provide significant and lasting relief from recurrent or chronic skin conditions.

The skin reflects imbalances within the body's internal landscape and the effects of the environment. Internal disharmonies caused by strong emotions, diet, and your constitution as well as environmental influences, such as wind, dryness, dampness, and heat can all contribute to the development of a skin disorder.

Oriental Medicine does not recognize skin problems as one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques such as acupuncture, herbal medicine, bodywork, life style/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 10 patients are treated with Oriental medicine for eczema, each of these 10 patients will receive a unique, customized treatment with different acupuncture points, different herbs and different lifestyle and dietary recommendations.

General Skin Conditions that can be treated with acupuncture and Oriental medicine:

- Acne
- Dermatitis
- Eczema
- Pruritus
- Psoriasis
- Rosacea
- Shingles
- Urticaria (Hives)



Treating Hives With Acupuncture

About 20 percent of people will experience urticaria or hives at some point in their lives. While standard treatment for hives is directed toward relieving the unpleasant symptoms with antihistamines or a corticosteroid drug, many people are turning to acupuncture and Oriental medicine to address underlying imbalances that cause this condition and to stop recurrent outbreaks once and for all.

What is Urticaria?

Hives (medically known as urticaria) are swollen, red, bumps, patches or welts on the skin that appear suddenly. Itching is the most common symptom associated with hives, although some people report that hives cause a stinging or burning sensation. Hives can occur anywhere on the body including the hands, face, lips, tongue, throat, or ears.

Hives are a sign that the whole body is experiencing a hypersensitivity reaction and an outbreak can occur due to a wide array of stimuli. While intolerance to certain foods, additives, intense emotions, sunlight exposure, and medications can all cause hives, in the majority of outbreaks (70-75%), the exact cause of hives remains unknown.

Hives can last for just a few minutes, a few hours, or they can persist for several weeks. Hives are rarely a medical emergency, but in some cases they can be accompanied by shock and difficulty breathing and can be life threatening. Treatment of hives is directed toward relieving the unpleasant symptoms, primarily itching. Over-the-counter or prescription antihistamines are most often used. When antihistamines don't provide relief, oral corticosteroids may be prescribed. In addition to medications, applying cool compresses to the affected area and wearing light, loose-fitting clothing can help ease the discomfort of hives.

Urticaria and Oriental Medicine

Evidence that Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine have been used for skin disorders, such as hives, can be found in early medical literature dating back to 3AD. Medicinal plants and stone needles were utilized to relieve and cure discomforts of the external areas of the body.

In Oriental medicine, an outbreak of hives is described as *wind invading the skin and the meridians*, causing itching and swelling. When the eruptions are red it is an indication that *wind* and *heat* are involved. When the eruptions are a pale pink or white, it is likely that the diagnoses will be *wind-cold invading the skin*. How the condition is diagnosed will determine what acupuncture points are used, what herbal medicinals are prescribed and what lifestyle/dietary recommendations are made.

Treatments will be directed at addressing both the root (cause) and the branch (symptoms) of the condition by providing immediate relief from the itching and swelling (the branch) and addressing the underlying imbalances and triggers that are causing the condition (the root).

While many different acupuncture points are used, depending on your specific symptoms and the state of your overall health, here are some acupuncture points that are commonly used to treat hives:

Spleen 10 (SP 10) is located two finger breadths above the top inner corner of the kneecap when the knee is slightly bent. It is on the bulge of the medial portion of muscle quadriceps femoris. This point is one of the major points on the body for skin conditions including eczema and hives.

Large Intestine 11 (LI 11) can be found in the depression at the outer part of the elbow crease, between the elbow tendon and the bone. The point is best located when the arm is bent at 90 degrees with the palm facing the abdomen. This point helps clear expel wind and heat from the body and reduces inflammation.

A study conducted at the *Isfahan University of Medical Sciences* in Iran examined the efficacy of acupuncture in the treatment of chronic urticaria.

For this double-blind, placebo-controlled study, forty patients with chronic urticaria were divided into two equal groups. One group was treated with real acupuncture and the other with sham acupuncture for 3 weeks. The results showed that acupuncture was able to reduce both episode rate and episode duration of urticaria by as much as 25% when compared with the sham acupuncture throughout the duration of study.

After three weeks the majority of the acupuncture treated patients experienced partial remission of their symptoms. The researchers also noted that the greatest improvements were seen in the third week of treatments and commented that the efficacy of acupuncture seemed to increase with each treatment.

Source: Internet Journal of Dermatology, 2006, Volume 3.

Food for Health Skin

What you put on your plate can be more important than what you put on your skin:

Carrots and Sweet Potatoes - Healthy skin is directly dependent on the amount of vitamin A in our diet. Vitamin A acts as an antioxidant to neutralize harmful elements in our skin, helping to prevent wrinkles, resist infection and maintain the skin's elasticity. One of the best places to get Vitamin A is vegetables that are deep orange in color.

Blackberries, Blueberries, Strawberries, and Plums - In a study recently published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, these four fruits weighed in with the

highest "total antioxidant capacity" of any food. . The antioxidants and other phytochemicals in these fruits can protect the cell from damage and disintegration, thus guarding against premature aging.

Salmon, Walnuts, Canola Oil, and Flax Seed - Essential fatty acids (EFAs) are responsible for skin repair, moisture content, and overall flexibility, but because the body cannot produce its own EFAs, they must be obtained through the diet. Fish, walnuts, and flax seed oil are among the best sources for omega 3 fatty acid.

Olive Oil - Olive oil contains more than essential fatty acids. Eating good-quality olive oil helps keep skin lubricated and keeps it looking and feeling healthier overall.



Which olive oil is the best for your skin? Those labeled "cold pressed", "expeller processed", or "extra virgin" are the least processed forms. As a result, they contain the highest levels of antioxidative substances.

Whole Wheat Bread, Brown Rice, Turkey, Tuna and Brazil Nuts - Selenium is an antioxidant mineral responsible for tissue elasticity and healthy skin. It may play an important role in preventing skin cancer, as some recent studies are showing that skin damaged by the sun may suffer fewer consequences if selenium levels are high.

Dietary sources of selenium include wheat germ, seafood such as tuna and salmon, garlic, Brazil nuts, eggs, brown rice, and whole wheat bread. Brazil nuts are perhaps the best source, and eating just 3-4 Brazil nuts per day provides adequate selenium intake for most people.

Green Tea – Green tea's ability to slow down the development of some signs of aging is attributed to its high levels of *polyphenols*, which have been well-documented for their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Green tea also may help prevent or reduce the risk of skin cancer according to a study published recently in the *Archives of Dermatology*, which shows that whether taken orally or applied to the skin, green tea can reduce the risk of damage from ultraviolet light and thus reduce the risk of skin cancer.

Water - Hydration plays a key role in keeping skin cells healthy. It is essential to maintaining your skin's elasticity and suppleness. Keeping cells hydrated helps cells move nutrients in and toxins out, which helps keep skin clean and clear.