

Acupuncture And Low Back Pain

Low back pain is an extremely common concern, affecting anywhere from 75 to 90 percent of people at some point in their lives. Low back pain is second only to the common cold as a cause of lost days at work and is one of the most common reasons to seek medical care, including acupuncture. In fact, one of the top reasons that people get acupuncture treatments is for low back pain.

The Oriental Medicine Perspective of Low Back Pain

In spite of the large number of pathological conditions that can give rise to low back pain, up to 85% of the cases are classified by Western physicians as '*non-specific*'. When low back pain is looked at from an Oriental medicine perspective, it is seen as a disruption of the flow of Qi within the area and associated with a specific disharmony and then treated accordingly.



The basis of acupuncture is expressed in this famous Chinese saying: "**Bu tong ze tong, tong ze bu tong**" which means "**free flow: no pain, no free flow: pain.**"

In other words, any kind of pain or illness represents an obstruction in the normal flow of Qi or life force. Simply put, acupuncture moves Qi, restoring free flow.

The disruption of Qi that results in low back pain is usually associated with the following three disharmonies:

Weak Kidney Qi - In Oriental medicine, the lower back is referred to as the "dwelling of the Kidneys". The majority of chronic low back pain conditions are associated with Kidney Deficiency. Kidney Deficiency type pain is dull and comes and goes. It is usually aggravated by over tiredness and improves with rest.

Stagnation of Qi and Blood - When the flow of Qi along the meridians that traverse the lumbar region becomes congested, it is referred to as the stagnation of Qi and blood. This presents with a severe stabbing pain that is worse with rest and better with movement, tender to touch and can be accompanied by stiffness and tightness.

Invasion of Cold and Dampness - Cold, damp type pain is worse in the morning and when the weather is cold and damp. This type of pain improves with movement and the application of heat. Stiffness and contraction of back muscles that is aggravated by rest indicates cold predominance while swelling, numbness and a heavy sensation are indicative of dampness.

While acupuncture is readily accepted as a viable option for low back pain in mainstream modern medicine, there has been little research to prove that it works. Now there are studies that support the clinical evidence.

In a German study, published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 1,162 adults with chronic, lower back pain were divided into groups treated with the standard pharmaceutical and exercise therapy commonly used in Western medicine and acupuncture. The researchers reported that acupuncture provided relief and lasting benefit to nearly twice as many lower back pain patients as drugs and exercise. Forty-eight percent of the acupuncture patients reported at least a one-third decrease in pain along with improvement in their ability to function, versus 27 percent of the patients treated with conventional methods reporting such benefits.

In another recent study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers from the University of Maryland School of Medicine analyzed 33 studies covering more than 2,100 patients from around the world on acupuncture for low back pain.

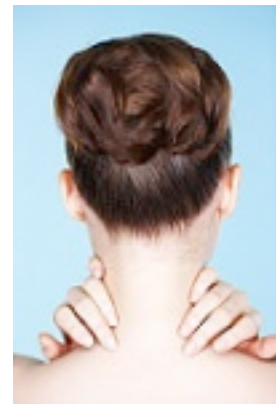
They found acupuncture provided definite pain relief in the short-term (defined as relief sustained for three weeks after the end of the acupuncture sessions).

Ah Shi or “That’s it!” Points

Not all acupuncture points have a name and specific location. Some of the most effective points to use in acupuncture are local points of tenderness. These points are referred to as Ah Shi points which in Chinese literally means, “That’s the point!”

Ah Shi or “that’s it!” points were first mentioned during the Tang Dynasty (founded in 618 AD) classic *Thousand Ducat Prescriptions*. These points become spontaneously tender when disease or injury occurs, or in locations where Qi has become congested but which are not among the regular acupuncture points on a specific meridian or pathway.

Their locations are not fixed; they are the points that, upon palpation, are the most sensitive. In many cases a small knot or pea sized nodule can be felt under the skin at these points of tenderness.



The Ah Shi points are especially effective in the treatment of pain and are often used in conjunction with local and distal acupuncture points.

If you have pain, palpate around the area of pain to see if you can find the Ah Shi points. This is a great way to self treat the problem.

Source: acufinder.com