



Acupuncture 4 Autoimmune Disorders

Since I began acupuncture for RA six years ago, I have less inflammation & less pain. I can better read my body's signals and make adjustments before it flares.

An unexpected benefit is that I have much more balance in my life, thanks to Kayte's "whole person, whole life" approach. I'd recommend acupuncture to anyone with an autoimmune disease because it complements a doctor's prescribed treatment regimen and there are NO side effects!

-Andrea Serna, Ed.D

Approximately 50 million Americans have some form of autoimmune disorder, of which there are at least 80 different kinds, falling into 3 main areas: connective tissue (i.e., rheumatoid arthritis, lupus); neuromuscular (i.e., MS); and endocrine (i.e., Graves, diabetes); and others (such as IBS and blood disorders).

According to Oriental medicine, autoimmune disorders occur when there is imbalance within the body. Acupuncture is used to help the body restore balance, treating the root of the disorder, while specifically addressing the symptoms that are unique to each person.

Practitioners focus on treating patients individually – according to the “signs and symptoms” rather than according to a disease name. A very detailed history is taken, and long-term treatment strategies are developed to help prolong the remission phase.

During an acute stage, treatment centers around reducing the pain, discomfort and dramatic symptoms. During the remission stage, when symptoms have temporarily subsided, the approach zeros in on supporting the immune system, strengthening organ function, nourishing the blood, and more specifically identifying and reducing triggers.

Due to the diversity and complexity of autoimmune disorders, integrative medicine solutions including acupuncture and Oriental medicine have received much positive attention as successful therapies particularly for providing pain relief, regulating the immune system, managing symptoms and improving overall quality of life.

Autoimmune Self Help

Befriend your body.

Pay attention to your body and its reactions to what you are doing, thinking, and feeling. Be curious. Be present. Become your body's witness, ally, advocate and friend.

Exercise.

Physical activity can help regulate everything from hormones to digestion. Try yoga or tai chi for gentle movement, mindfulness, and physical relaxation.

Pay attention to your thoughts,

Experiment with stress management techniques, such as meditation, yoga, guided imagery, biofeedback, journaling, walking and other approaches for managing mental stress.

Be a detective:

Become an expert on your body. Keep a diary of symptoms. Record times of increased or easing symptoms, food/drink ingested, work stress, hormones, and other possibly related factors. Watch for patterns and triggers so that you can predict / avoid them.

Avoid stimulants.

Figure out what stimulates/irritates you. Consider eliminating caffeine, alcohol, refined sugar, nicotine, chocolate, etc.

Get body work.

Chiropractic care, craniosacral therapy and massage offer benefits of improved circulation, pain relief.

Get educated

Learn all you can about your condition particularly and about new approaches to autoimmune issues generally. For example, check out: *Autoimmune: The Cause and The Cure* by Annesse Brockley & Kristin Urdiales

It works.

51 patients with mild to moderately active Crohn's disease had a decrease in disease activity after receiving 10 sessions of acupuncture. Study members also showed an improvement in general well-being and reported an improvement in quality of life.

Source: Joos S, Brinkhaus B, Maluche C, Maupai N, Kohnen R, Kraehmer N, Hahn EG, Schuppan D. Acupuncture and moxibustion in the treatment of active Crohn's disease: a randomized controlled study. Digestion. 2004;69(3):131-9.

310 patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis were given a Chinese herbal formula. After 10 days, 70% reported significant pain reduction. At the end of one month, blood work values indicative of RA, such as erythrocyte sedimentation rate and rheumatoid factor, were normal in half the patients.

Source: Study published in the Chinese Journal of Integrated Traditional and Western Medicine 1985; 5(5): 284-285