

Allergies, Asthma and Chinese Medicine

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Does the blooming of spring also correspond with the blooming of your hay fever symptoms? Got seasonal allergies? If you're one of the many hay fever sufferers out there, a new study suggests acupuncture might help. In an article published in February in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers conducted a trial that showed 12 acupuncture treatments could reduce seasonal allergies and the need to take allergy medicine.

"From my experience...I would recommend trying acupuncture if patients are not satisfied with the conventional anti-allergic medication or treatment or they suffer from more or less serious sides effects of the conventional medication," said study co-author Dr. Benno Brinkhaus .

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine have a long history of use and effectiveness for chronic respiratory issues such as allergies and asthma. Over 2,500 years of use to be exact.

Allergies are overreactions of the immune system to things in the environment, such as dust, pollen, animal dander, and foods. In Chinese medicine, asthma is called "xiao chuan", which means wheezing and dyspnea, respectively. With allergies and asthma, your body often becomes sensitive to some environmental trigger causing symptoms such as sneezing, itchy eyes, rhinitis, coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath.

The fundamental cause of asthma in Chinese medicine is the presence of phlegm in the body. Phlegm is a representational term for heavy, sticky,

obstructive fluids that harass the proper function of the lungs. Storage of phlegm in the lungs becomes the main cause for recurrent asthma attacks. Acupuncture helps by transforming phlegm, stimulating the immune system to strengthen your defenses as well as helping to regulate your body's reactions and decrease its hyperactivity. So instead of simply suppressing your body's reaction with antihistamines, Chinese medicine works to correct the root cause of the problem. Many people have even been able to decrease their medications over time.

Diet can also trigger an asthma attack. Dairy products are well known to be producers of phlegm in the body and can aggravate and perpetuate allergy and asthma symptoms, according to Chinese medicine. Raw and cold food can contribute to the stagnation of fluid circulation and the increase in the production of phlegm. Heavy, sweet, and greasy food tend to create phlegm and heat in the body. Fish, crabs, shellfish and other seafood have also been noted to increase the likelihood of asthma attacks as well.

Acupuncture treatments are usually very comfortable and relaxing experiences for patients and can significantly reduce the impact respiratory conditions have. Chinese medicine, along with Western medicine, can address the allergy response, help to decrease the stress and tension, as well as offering some lifestyle and dietary guidelines to help improve your asthma symptoms and frequency of occurrence.