

Acupuncture & Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is the second most common rheumatic disorder in the United States behind arthritis, according to the American College of Rheumatology.¹

People diagnosed with fibromyalgia experience a wide range of symptoms, including fatigue, pain, stiffness, aches, muscle tenderness, along with sleep disorders, intestinal and bowel troubles.

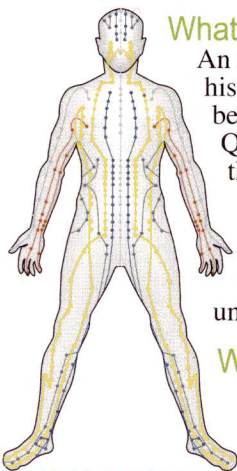
The diagnosis of fibromyalgia can be confirmed when 11 out of 18 specific points on the body are tender to pressure. Interestingly, some of these tender points closely correspond to the location of ancient acupuncture points.

How acupuncture and Chinese medicine can help.

According to the theories of acupuncture and Chinese medicine, an imbalance to the flow of Qi and blood can create symptoms and signs that reflect a Western diagnosis of fibromyalgia.

Qi (pronounced "chee") is the energy or the power that animates and supports the functions of the body. It flows through specific pathways, called *Meridians*, and provides nourishment for the entire body.

When Qi is abundant and freely circulating throughout the body, there is health and pain-free living. When Qi becomes "blocked," or the supply is inadequate, pain, stiffness and other symptoms related to fibromyalgia can appear.

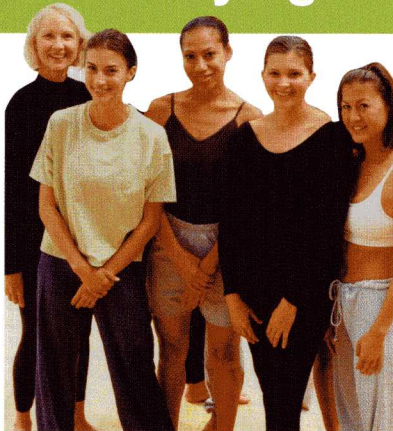


What does an acupuncturist do?

An acupuncturist will take a complete health history in order to find out where Qi has become blocked, and/or why the amount of Qi within the body has changed. They will then develop a treatment plan tailored to address the meridian pathways that are out of balance. The goal of such a plan will be to eliminate visible symptoms, while addressing the root cause(s) and underlying imbalances.

What is out-of-balance?

The body constantly strives to maintain a healthy balance of Qi traveling through the meridian pathways. When the flow of Qi has been disrupted, or the supply of Qi has changed, the body becomes unbalanced and the meridians cannot properly nourish the body. This is when signs and symptoms appear.



Most cases of fibromyalgia fit into the Chinese diagnosis of a **Liver**, **Spleen**, and/or **Heart** disharmony. This doesn't mean that these organs have a "problem," it means that the "functions" of these meridians according the Chinese medical diagnosis are out of balance.

The functions related to the **Liver** organ, according to Chinese medicine, are to control the smooth flow of blood, Qi, and emotions and to nourish the tendons. When the Liver meridian becomes "blocked" there will be an inadequate supply of blood and Qi flowing throughout the body. The tendons and muscles will not be properly nourished, leading to stiffness and pain. Other symptoms of a "blocked" Liver are depression, anger, anxiety, and insomnia. A Liver imbalance can occur from improper diet, stress, deep, unexpressed anger, drugs, and alcohol.

The Chinese function of the **Spleen** is to transform the food that we ingest into Qi and blood. The health of the Spleen is affected by diet, over-concentration, and worry. An unbalanced Spleen can result in fatigue, digestive troubles, muscle stiffness, and pain.

When there is an insufficient amount of Qi and blood produced by the Spleen, the **Heart** organ will be affected. The role of the Heart is to pump blood throughout the body. It is also considered to be the home of the *Spirit*. If the Spleen cannot generate enough blood to nourish the Heart, the Heart Qi does not have enough control to properly house the *Spirit*. Symptoms can include anxiety, palpitations, insomnia, and emotional unrest.

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine can provide a safe alternative in the effective treatment of fibromyalgia. Along with acupuncture, natural herbal formulas, dietary recommendations and calming exercises can also help promote balance and health.

In November 1997, the National Institute of Health (NIH), stated that acupuncture could be an effective modality in treating fibromyalgia. Not only by treating the pain and discomfort, but also by addressing the underlying problems that have caused the imbalance.²

¹ American College of Rheumatology

² The 1997 NIH consensus on the Efficacy of acupuncture