

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

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People suffering from rheumatoid arthritis often experience pain, swelling, and stiffness of the joints, and limited movements. Acupuncture helps slow the disease and decrease the severity of the symptoms because it works through the nervous system and energy channels of the body. Acupuncture treatment of rheumatoid arthritis balances the immune system, calms the nervous system, and has been shown to cause the brain to release natural painkillers in the body, such as endorphins and encephalins.

Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine are effective and present less risk than surgery, steroids, or NSAIDS to treat rheumatoid arthritis. Even for patients who eventually need a joint replacement, acupuncture and Chinese medicine before and after the surgery can aid in pain relief, speed rehabilitation, and correct complications of surgery. In some instances, acupuncture and Chinese medicine can improve the response and decrease side effects to Western pharmaceutical drugs at lower dosages.

Treatment Principles

Traditional acupuncturists treat the whole body rather than just a disease in order to get to the root of the problem. In general, acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine should be used for the long-term prevention of future reoccurrences during periods of relative remission and to prevent the progression of the disease. While during acute attacks, a combination of Chinese medicine, acupuncture and moxibustion may be particularly effective.

Some acupuncture techniques used to treat rheumatoid arthritis include:

- ◆ Distal Point Therapy – allows mobilization and manual therapy to be performed at the same time and is performed away from the point of injury or pain.
- ◆ Local Point Therapy – stimulates a point near the affected area for a short period of time, effectively eases pain, reduces inflammation, and may prevent flare-up
- ◆ Chinese Herbal Medicine – various Chinese Medicines used either topically or taken orally to control the symptoms and ease pain
- ◆ Moxibustion – a complimentary technique where a burning stick or cone is placed over the affected area without burning the skin to increase the circulation of blood and strengthen the life energy, Qi

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