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Managing Diabetes with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

It is estimated that 25.8 million men, women and children in the United States have diabetes, a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life. The cause of diabetes continues to be a mystery, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles.



According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 4 people remain unaware that they live with diabetes. Sometimes the body will give warning signs that help your physician or acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioner make an early diagnosis. It is important to get a diagnosis as soon as you suspect that diabetes may be a problem for you, as untreated diabetes affects the whole body and can lead to other medical problems, including heart disease, kidney failure, blindness, peripheral neuropathy, digestive disorders and periodontal disease.

In order to manage this condition, it is essential for people with diabetes to make healthy lifestyle choices in diet, exercise and other health habits. Another important factor when treating diabetes is creating a support team of health care professionals, including a licensed acupuncturist.

Diabetes According to Oriental Medicine

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine have been used to treat diabetes for over 2000 years. According to Oriental medicine, diabetes is caused by an imbalance of the cyclical flow of Qi within the meridians and organ systems. This particular imbalance produces heat that depletes the body's fluids and Qi, causing symptoms such as extreme fatigue, lethargy, unexplained weight loss, excessive thirst, excessive urination, excessive eating, slow healing of cuts and wounds, infections, irritability, tingling or numbness in the extremities, and blurry vision.

Offering a holistic approach that is beneficial in the treatment of diabetes, acupuncture and Oriental medicine provides a treatment plan specifically tailored to the needs of each individual to provide relief of the symptoms associated with diabetes. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can assist the body by helping it return to its normal healthy functioning state.

In addition to acupuncture, a variety of techniques may be used during treatment, including bodywork, lifestyle/dietary recommendations, energetic exercises and herbal medicine. The treatment for diabetes will focus on regulating the circulation of blood and

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While a sweet taste delights our taste buds, overindulgence can cause or worsen digestive problems and upset our metabolic and emotional balance. According to acupuncture and Oriental medicine, when one or more of the organs responsible for digestion no longer functions properly, it potentially puts the other organs of the body in danger.

Diabetes is one example of a disease that has a variety of health consequences that can sometimes result from a faulty digestive system. The onset of type 2 diabetes, also known as insulin-resistant diabetes, frequently affects the overweight adult population,

Qi and balancing the organ systems to improve pancreatic function and address internal heat and the depletion of fluids.

Acupuncture Treats Peripheral Neuropathy

Peripheral neuropathy is damage to the peripheral nervous system, which serves as pathways of communication between the brain and the rest of the body. When something interrupts this process, signs of peripheral neuropathy may occur.

Common signs of peripheral neuropathy include tingling, numbness, loss of sensation, muscle weakness and pain. For some people, it is experienced as the uncomfortable sensation of "pins and needles", or burning pain (especially at night) of their hands or feet. Others may suffer even more extreme symptoms such as muscle wasting, paralysis, or organ or gland dysfunction.

In most cases, peripheral neuropathy is secondary to another condition. There are many factors that can bring about peripheral neuropathy including diabetes, malnutrition, drugs, viral and bacterial infections, alcoholism and poison exposure. Other causes of peripheral neuropathy include compression or entrapment (such as carpal tunnel syndrome), direct physical injury to a nerve, fractures or dislocated bones, penetrated injuries, and pressure involving superficial nerves that can result from prolonged use of crutches, staying in the same position too long, tumor, intraneural hemorrhage, exposure to cold, radiation or atherosclerosis.

With more than 100 types of peripheral neuropathies in existence, each with its own characteristic set of symptoms, pattern of development, and prognosis, the symptoms can vary as much as the cause. Nevertheless, peripheral neuropathy is a symptom for many different patterns of disharmony within the body and is a condition that can be managed with regular acupuncture and Oriental medicine treatments.

Oriental medicine teaches that peripheral neuropathy is due to dampness moving to the limbs, where it obstructs the flow of Qi (energy) and blood within them. The treatment is twofold: to treat the underlying factor that is causing this dampness to accumulate, and to directly facilitate the circulation of Qi and blood in the affected area. By improving circulation, the nerve tissues of the affected area can be nourished to repair function and reduce pain.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine aims to treat each individual uniquely, depending on what caused the neuropathy and how it manifests. In addition to seeking acupuncture therapy, there are a few things you can practice at home:

Adopt Healthy Habits

Healthy habits such as maintaining optimal weight, avoiding exposure to toxins, following a physician-supervised exercise program, eating a balanced diet, correcting vitamin deficiencies, and limiting or avoiding alcohol consumption can reduce the physical and emotional effects of peripheral neuropathy.

Boost Circulation with Massage

Massage can help boost circulation, which is generally poor and leaves these areas vulnerable to trauma. You can stimulate your feet, lower legs, hands and arms with gentle massage using light pressure.

Relax to Reduce External Triggers

Consider relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, self-hypnosis or biofeedback. These can help you learn to control the external factors that trigger pain.

although one may still suffer from the disease while being a normal weight.

According to acupuncture and Oriental medicine, after taking a bite and swallowing your food, the stomach receives it and proceeds to 'cook,' 'steam' or 'ferment' it. The stomach is known as 'the sea of grain and water.' The 'cooking' extracts vital nutrients from the 'grain' and passes them on to the spleen for further processing. The spleen then distributes the nutrients accordingly throughout the body.

Diet is significant for maintaining health or restoring it, and can help stabilize blood glucose levels and curb sweet cravings by following dietary recommendations.

Foods that represent the sweet flavor aid the stomach and spleen. It may surprise some to learn that acupuncture and Oriental medicine considers meats such as pork and chicken as sweet. Vegetables such as yams, sweet potatoes, corn, snow peas, squash and even turnips are also considered sweet.

If you wish to reduce your consumption of sweet foods and to curb your sweet tooth, eating a savory dish made with coconut milk can ease the need for a dessert afterward.

Anything heavily processed, greasy or high in sugar can injure the spleen and cause a condition known as internal phlegm. This disorder represents a turbid,

Soak for Pain Relief

A warm foot bath with Epsom salt may also help relieve pain. If there is loss of sensation in the hands or feet, you should avoid extreme temperatures, as you may not feel the damaging effects.

Do you or someone you know suffer from peripheral neuropathy? Call today to find out what acupuncture and Oriental medicine can do for you!

heavy condition that interferes with digestion and can cause belching, bloating, pain and diarrhea.

If you are following a diabetic diet, even fruits are recommended only in moderate amounts due to their relatively high sugar content. Try pairing your fruit with a high-fiber grain like oatmeal. The fiber will slow down digestion and help keep blood sugar levels stable. Or you could consider a moderately sweet dessert comprised of a yam with butter and cinnamon.

By following the acupuncture and Oriental medicine guidelines for properties of food, you can easily find lower-sugar foods that are allowed, yet still provide a sweet flavor and can replace unhealthy desserts.