



Acupuncture and Stress



A study published in the Annals of Yoga and Physical Therapy looked at how acupuncture treatments affect stress levels in administrative workers at a local hospital. The study included 58 participants who reported high levels of stress associated with their jobs. The participants were treated with eight weeks of auricular acupuncture. After the eight acupuncture sessions, the workers reported their stress levels had decreased from high to moderate. The study hypothesizes reduced stress levels are associated with regular acupuncture treatments due to the release of neurotransmitters in the body. This study and many others are providing evidence that acupuncture can indeed decrease stress levels and improve overall health.

Stress is defined as either pressure or tension exerted on an object or a state of mental or emotional strain resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

Here are some facts from the Global Organization for Stress:

- Americans report higher levels of stress than most people in other countries around the globe.
- Surveys show nearly one out of 75 people worldwide, experience panic attacks.
- Stress in American teenagers is now one of the top health concerns and it is being found that teenagers experiencing stress are more likely to develop long-term health problems.
- We all experience stress in our lives.
- But learning how to deal with it can be crucial for a happy, healthy life.

One way to deal with stress involves the use of a 3,000 year old medical system, known as Traditional Chinese Medicine or TCM. TCM uses many different modalities or tools to treat the human mind and body. The most commonly used modality is acupuncture. And while acupuncture is still not widely accepted in the United States, it is gaining ground.

Studies show acupuncture can reduce stress when used regularly. The Journal of Endocrinology published a study showing stress hormones, like cortisol, were lower in rats that had received electroacupuncture. The use of electroacupuncture actually blocked the chronic stress hormones in the rats. It does the exact same thing for humans. TCM practitioners have known this for thousands of years and they didn't need the research to prove it.

Specific acupuncture points on the body are better for relieving stress and are used frequently by licensed practitioners. One of these points is Yin Tang. Yin Tang is located directly between the inner edges of the eyebrows. It is a reflex point of the pituitary gland. Yin Tang calms the mind and relaxes the body by helping control hormone secretions.

Another acupuncture point, Kidney 1, is not as frequently used because of its location. But it can work wonders for decreasing stress. Kidney 1 is located on the bottom of the foot, at the junction of the anterior one third and posterior two thirds of the line connecting the base of the second and third toes and the heel. This point is VERY sensitive, but it has amazing properties. Kidney 1 can sedate and calm the mind, while also regulating blood flow to the upper part of the body, aka the brain.

There are other tools as TCM practitioners we can use to relieve stress, such as cupping and herbs. But acupuncture and acupressure tend to work the quickest. Ask me to find out more!

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