

Acupuncture Relief Of Nasal Allergies Confirmed

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Acupuncture soothes nasal allergy symptoms. Investigators at Beijing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Affiliated Hospital conducted a meta-analysis of 30 independent clinical trials with a sample size of 2,602 allergic rhinitis patients. [1] The researchers (Tang et al.) conclude, “Acupuncture, either used alone or combined with other treatments such as moxibustion, herbal medicine, and western medicine, were proven to have both short and long-term clinical benefits to allergic rhinitis sufferers.” The following is a

basic overview of common acupuncture points used for the treatment of allergic rhinitis across the multiple studies in the meta-analysis:

- LI20 (Yingxiang)
- Yintang (extra)
- LI4 (Hegu)
- ST36 (Zusanli)
- EX-HN8 (Shangyingxiang, Bitong)

Allergic rhinitis (AR) is an inflammatory disorder of the nasal mucosa induced by allergen exposure that triggers IgE (immunoglobulin E) mediated inflammation. [2] In the USA, approximately 40–60 million people suffer from allergic rhinitis. [3] AR is clinically characterized by rhinorrhea (thin and primarily clear nasal discharge), sneezing, nasal itching, and nasal congestion. AR is also associated with decreased concentration and focus, irritability, sleep disturbances, and fatigue. This impacts the quality of life and reduces work productivity. In addition, there is a high risk of developing asthma for AR patients. [4] Common medications for the treatment of allergic rhinitis include intranasal corticosteroids, oral H1-antihistamines, and leukotriene receptor antagonists (LTRAs). While effective, these medications often produce adverse effects and may be contraindicated during pregnancy and for children, the elderly, and patients with specific medical conditions. [5]

The following are clinical details of the meta-analysis. A total of 27 out of 30 studies made extensive use of the Yingxiang point. This point is anatomically located on the nasolabial groove, at the midpoint of the lateral border of the ala nasi. This acupuncture point is located on the hand Yangming large intestine meridian. It is also the crossing point of the stomach and the large intestine meridians. Needling this point smooths the flow of qi in the meridians and clears obstructions from the nasal orifice.

This point is traditionally indicated for Bi Yuan (nasal congestion), Bi Qiu (sniveling nose), and Bi Niu (nosebleed). According to Traditional Chinese Medicine principles, the lungs and large intestine have an interior-exterior relationship (i.e., the lungs and large intestine are functionally interconnected). As a result, diseases of the lungs can be treated by needling acupuncture points on either the lung meridian or the large intestine meridian.

A total of 23 studies document use of the Yintang point. This acupoint is located between the two medial ends of the eyebrows in the glabella. Yintang plays a key role in “opening the orifices and regulating the spirit.” Needling this point promotes qi and blood circulation of the head and also stabilizes the mind and spirit. A total of 17 studies used the Hegu point. Hegu is the Yuan-source point of the hand Yangming large intestine meridian. Needling this point disperses obstructions in the Yangming meridian and regulates the lung qi.

A total of 14 studies used Zusanli. Zusanli is the He-confluence point of the foot Yangming stomach meridian, which starts at the side of the nose. The stomach meridian of foot yangming primary channel begins at the side of the nose at Yingxiang (LI20) and then ascends to the root of the nose where it intersects with Jingming (BL1). Zusanli activates local qi and blood circulation and removes local obstructions affecting the meridians. Needling this point also regulates the stomach, intestines, and lungs for purposes of strengthening the internal organs related to allergic rhinitis. A total of 11 studies used Shangyingxiang (also known as Bitong). Needling this point promotes local qi and blood circulation and relieves nasal congestion. This acupoint is located near the upper end of the nasolabial groove, at the junction of the maxilla and the nasal cavity.

The researchers conclude that acupuncture provides both long and short term relief as a standalone therapy, in combination with other Chinese medicine treatment modalities, and in combination with medications. Other independent sources indicate that acupuncture is effective for the alleviation of allergic rhinitis. The National Institutes of Health (NIH, USA) website covering the topic of seasonal allergies and complementary medicine states, “There are data from some randomized controlled trials that suggests that acupuncture may improve some symptoms of allergic rhinitis, as well as quality of life.” The NIH website notes that a clinical practice guideline issued by the American Academy of Otolaryngology states, “Clinicians may offer acupuncture, or refer to a clinician who can offer acupuncture, for patients with allergic rhinitis who are interested in nonpharmacologic therapy.” [7]

The NIH website references a meta-analysis with a sample size of 2,365 allergic rhinitis patients, “compared with a control group, the acupuncture treatment group had a significant reduction in nasal symptom scores, medication scores, and serum IgE, and an increase in quality of life scores.” [8,9] In addition, the NIH website notes that “there are high-quality randomized controlled trials that demonstrate efficacy for acupuncture in the treatment of both seasonal and perennial allergic rhinitis...” [10]

Scientific investigations confirm that acupuncture is a reasonable treatment option for patients with allergic rhinitis. To learn more, consult with your primary licensed acupuncturist or licensed acupuncturists in your area.

References

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