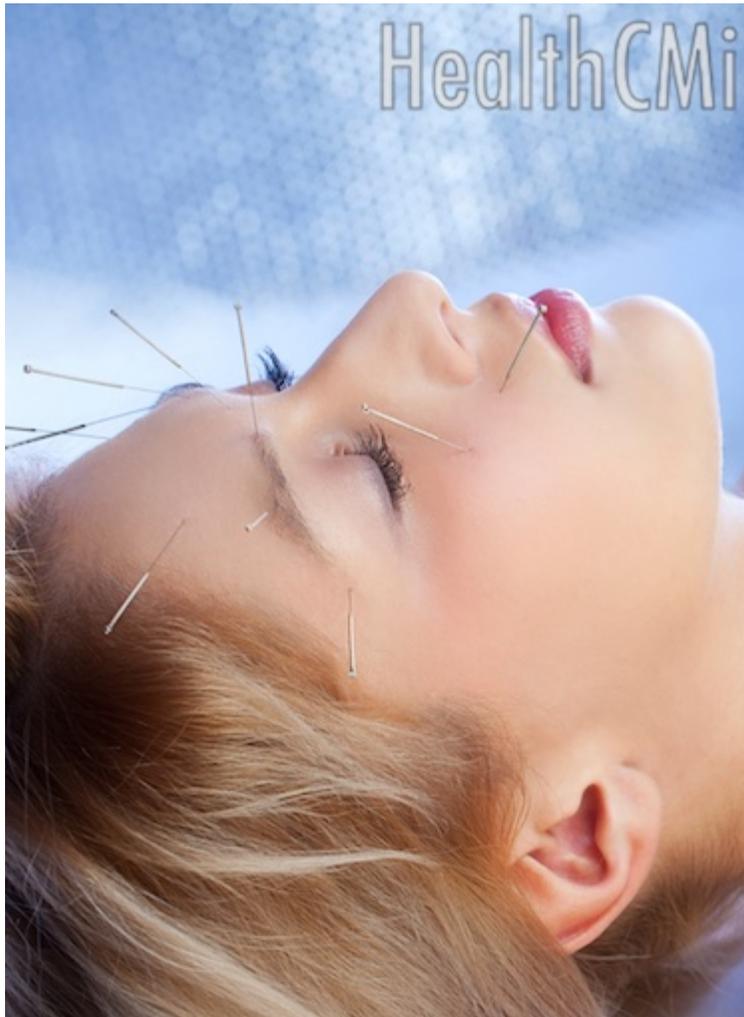


Acupuncture Soothes Allergies & Sinus

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Acupuncture relieves sinus problems due to allergies. Research published in the ***American Journal of Rhinology & Allergy*** incorporates a meta-analysis of high quality allergy related studies comparing groups receiving acupuncture versus control groups. The researchers documented that acupuncture “produced significantly greater diminution of nasal symptoms” in the acupuncture group. They add, “Our meta-analysis showed that (the) acupuncture group has superior effect(s) in reduction of both rhinitis symptoms and the requirement for antiallergic medication compared with (the) control group.”

The research team notes that allergic rhinitis is a nasal hypersensitivity reaction to allergens. Common triggers include irritants such as dust mites, animal dander, and pollens. Reactions include nasal congestion, rhinorrhea

(“runny nose”), sneezing, and pruritus (severe itching). Allergic rhinitis affects approximately 1.4 billion people with increasing numbers. Medications used to combat allergic rhinitis include antihistamines, corticosteroids, mast cell stabilizers, anticholinergics, and antileukotrienes.

Biomedicine And Acupuncture

The researchers note potential biological mechanisms making acupuncture effective for the treatment of allergic rhinitis. One mechanism is the ability of acupuncture to modulate cytokines, which are immune system cell secretions, and another is the ability of acupuncture to induce anti-inflammatory actions. The researchers identified changes in IgE as a result of acupuncture treatment for the treatment of allergic rhinitis. IgE is a class of immunoglobulins including antibodies that react to pollen, spores, animal dander and other substances. IgE levels often rise significantly during allergic reactions. The researchers note, “Our meta-analysis of serum IgE levels in three included trials showed a significant decrease of IgE for the acupuncture group compared with the control group. This result showed strong and consistent evidence that acupuncture treatment leads to favorable responses in immunologic outcomes, which have

been shown to be helpful in trials of proven therapeutic modalities, such as allergen-specific immunotherapy.”

Quality Of Research

This groundbreaking research distinguishes itself from prior investigations by including the “latest multicenter, randomized, parallel-controlled trials.” Stringent inclusion criteria included:

- Randomized controlled trials
- Diagnosis of allergic rhinitis
- Acupuncture compared with sham acupuncture or other control

A total of 174 abstracts were considered for inclusion but this was narrowed down to a limited number of trials meeting the inclusion criteria. All included trials reported on nasal symptoms, medication relief, quality of life, total IgE, or safety. A total of 2,365 participants made it to the final adoption in the research. This included 1,126 patients in the acupuncture treatment group and 1,239 in the control group.

The researchers conclude that acupuncture for the treatment of allergic rhinitis is indicated as a safe and effective modality of care in this meta-analysis. As a result, the researchers encourage continued research on this topic including future randomized-controlled trials to confirm the meta-analysis.

Acupuncture Or Drugs?

Acupuncture has been found equally effective as loratadine (Claritin®, Alavert®) for the treatment of dust mite allergies. Researchers from the Clinic of Otorhinolaryngology at the University Hospital Dresden (Germany) conclude that acupuncture is effective for the treatment of allergy related rhinitis and rhinoconjunctivitis. The researchers document that acupuncture relieves symptoms of rhinitis including nasal congestion, runny nose, post-nasal drip and sneezing.

An acupuncture treatment group was compared with a medication group receiving loratadine, an antihistamine. A total of 87% of acupuncture study group patients and 67% of loratadine study group patients showed improvements by the end of therapy. A ten week follow-up after completion of therapy documents that 80% of acupuncture study group patients and 0% of loratadine study group patients demonstrated lasting improvement. The researchers note, “Both in the acupuncture and the loratadine group a significant improvement was gained under therapy. In the ten-week period following the therapy, a significant deterioration which led to the recurrence of the allergic symptoms was shown in the loratadine group, while the significant improvement of the symptoms persisted in the acupuncture group.”

Rhinoscopy examinations for nasal concha size and mucosa condition including evaluations of mucosal reddening and swelling of the nasal concha were included in the research. IgE and interleukin (IL-4, IL-10, IFN- γ) levels were also evaluated plus an evaluation of nasal obstruction, nasal secretion and sneezing attacks was performed. Based on the results the researchers note “that the effectiveness of acupuncture is comparable to that of loratadine.”



Acupuncture was found to stimulate the production of IL-10, an interleukin that blocks histamine release from activated mast cells. Reduced IL-10 in the nasal mucosa is associated with an increase in nasal allergy symptoms. Acupuncture successfully increases IL-10 levels. The researchers note of acupuncture, “The results indicate the probability of an immunomodulatory effect.”

The researchers conclude, “Acupuncture is a clinically effective form of therapy in the treatment of patients suffering from persistent allergic rhinitis.” The researchers standardized the acupuncture treatments to include a protocolized selection of acupuncture points based upon Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) principles. The acupuncture points used for all patients were: LI 20, Bi Tong, Yin Tang, BL 2, GB 20, LI 4, LI 11, SI 3, ST 36, auricular 78, auricular 55.

Acupuncture needles were retained for 20 minutes each session. Patients received a total of twelve acupuncture treatments at a rate of twice weekly. Seirin® disposable needles were used: 0.3 X 0.30 mm for body acupuncture, 0.2 X 0.15 mm for auricular acupuncture. Patients taking the drug loratadine received 10mg doses every morning.

In related research, investigators documented a 96.5% success rate of acupuncture for the treatment of rhinitis. Participants received one treatment per day for fifteen acupuncture treatments. A second course of care was administered with the same parameters. A total of 61 persons had a total recovery, 21 showed marked improvement and 3 showed no improvement. Rhinoscopy and symptom improvement measures were used to evaluate the results. A two year follow-up confirmed the results.

Acupuncture needles employed in the study were 0.35 mm x 40 - 50 mm. The acupuncture points were: GB20 (Fengchi), LI4 (Hegu), ST36 (Zusanli). Supplementary acupuncture points were BL12 (Fengmen), BL13 (Feishu), Yintang (Ex-HN 3), GV14 (Dazhui). Supplementary acupuncture points were chosen dependent upon TCM differential diagnostics. In many cases, 20 minutes of manual needle manipulation were applied at each acupuncture session. Tonification and reduction acupuncture needle techniques and moxibustion were chosen dependent upon excess, deficient, heat and cold diagnostic patterns according to TCM principles.

In yet another study, investigators at RMIT University in Melbourne (Australia) studied 80 patients with chronic rhinitis and concluded that acupuncture is an effective treatment modality for rhinitis. Acupuncture points LI20, Yintang and GB 0 were the primary acupuncture points.

Supplementary points included LI4, ST36, and CV6. The acupuncture group had significantly better outcomes than either the control group or the sham acupuncture group. Each acupuncture session was 25 minutes in length and patients were given 16 acupuncture treatments at a rate of twice per week. Results were tabulated after a three month follow-up. Both nasal and ocular symptoms associated with chronic rhinitis improved significantly for the acupuncture group. Members of the acupuncture group were also able to reduce consumption of relief medications. The researchers concluded that acupuncture is "safe and effective" for the treatment of persistent allergic rhinitis.

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