

# Traditional Chinese medicine to treat cancer

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You have cancer. To say you're feeling completely outside of any comfort zone you've ever known is likely a great understatement. Much of your emotions are perhaps hard to explain and, unless you've been there, it's probably hard to truly understand. But our natural instinct as humans is to find a way to move forward, to somehow overcome and thrive, and that's likely what you will try to do.

Your core treatment may involve some combination of surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. During treatment, you may feel depressed, tired, nauseous, constipated, and may experience vomiting, diarrhea, hair loss, fever, mouth sores, pain, a loss of appetite, and skin irritation at the treatment site. Most of these side effects will subside after treatment and may be treated or prevented with medications or other types of interventions throughout your treatment.

Many of the side effects experienced during chemotherapy and radiation affect the digestive system. In the practice of traditional Chinese medicine, the digestive system, or EARTH, is the foundation of good health. By strengthening the meridians/pathways that regulate the digestive system, namely the spleen and stomach meridians, you set the stage for good health and enhancing the treatment of other presenting conditions.

Symptoms such as a low appetite, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation are often characterized as a deficiency of the digestive meridians (spleen or stomach Qi deficiency) and reflect a disharmony in these meridians.

When using acupuncture to address these concerns, the intention is to strengthen the digestive function in order to offset the symptoms and alleviate or minimize symptoms of fatigue, low appetite, constipation or diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting. The acupuncture points selected may be stimulated to either prevent, reduce or eliminate the occurrence of these issues throughout the course of your treatment.

Some of the classic acupuncture points stimulated include: ST.36, SP.6, SP.3, LIV.3.

- Zusanli ST.36 (Leg Three Miles) is located about three fingers-breadth below the kneecap/patella.

- Sanyinjiao SP.6 (Three Yin Intersection) is located on the inside of the lower leg, approximately three fingers-breadth above the prominence of the medial malleolus.

- Taibai SP.3 (Supreme White) is located on the inside (medial side) of the foot in the depression proximal and inferior to the head of the first metatarsal bone.

- Taichong LIV.3 (Great Rushing) is located on the upper surface (dorsum) of the foot and distal to the junction of the first and second metatarsal bones.

One of the key advantages of acupuncture is that it doesn't interfere with the main cancer treatment, so there is no concern with the mixing of these modalities.

In trying to have a positive attitude, some may say that difficulties such as this will build character, others will affirm that their character is quite fine and in no need of further building. Be that as it may, this is a time to draw close to family and close friends and take the best possible care of yourself.

Here's to your health and mine.

References: ***A Manual of Acupuncture*** by Peter Deadman and Mazin Al-Khafaji with Kevin Baker

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