



Quitting Smoking with Traditional Chinese Medicine

Smoking is a very difficult habit to overcome. While trying to quit it's common to experience anxiety, irritability, weight gain and other symptoms that can cause people to fail in their attempts to break the habit. Fortunately, both clinical experience and scientific research have shown that Traditional Chinese Medicine (or TCM for short) can help people reverse their addictions to tobacco.



How TCM can help

Over 3000 years old, TCM has accumulated a vast history of clinical experience for a wide variety of conditions. The World Health Organization recognises TCM as effective in the treatment of over 70 conditions, including smoking addictions.

Auricular acupuncture, a sub-specialty of acupuncture which makes use of points on the ear, is particularly effective in helping people quit smoking. When key points on the ear are combined with other points, acupuncture can change the way tobacco tastes, making the experience less pleasurable and decreasing the desire to smoke. As well, acupuncture, Chinese herbs and Chinese massage can be used to lessen the withdrawal symptoms experienced.



What to expect

Acupuncture is central to TCM's approach to helping you quit. Acupuncture involves inserting ultra-thin needles into carefully selected points located on the body. For your safety, always insist that your practitioner uses sterile, single-use needles.

Acupuncture treatment is not the painful experience most people imagine. Any discomfort is usually very mild, and the most common sensations are tingling, numbness or dull pressure. With auricular acupuncture, it is common for practitioners to make use of ear tacks that can be left on the ear for several days. By pressing these ear tacks throughout the day, the effect of the treatment can be maintained for a longer period of time.



Getting results

Please keep in mind that a true determination to quit smoking is key to success. While TCM can help lessen the desire to light up and can control withdrawal symptoms, effective treatment requires that you stay committed to ending your smoking habit.

Several published research papers have shown that TCM can be effective in helping motivated people in overcoming tobacco addictions.

A 2002 study of 141 adults found that acupuncture had a significant effect in reducing cigarette consumption. This effect was greatest when combined with smoking cessation education.¹ Another randomized, controlled study involving 46 smokers found that with acupuncture treatments, cigarette consumption fell by an average of 70%. A follow up study five years later found that these treatments had a lasting effect.²



A lifestyle approach to quitting smoking

Kicking the smoking habit can be a daunting challenge. But with motivation and the right support it can be done. Just as smoking is a part of a person's lifestyle, being cigarette-free means changing your lifestyle for the better. Choosing a healthier lifestyle will help your body through the transition and make breaking the addiction easier. A diet rich in whole grains and vegetables will supply your body with needed nutrition. Becoming more physically active and incorporating new daily routines will help prevent you from falling back into old habits.

As you go through the transition from smoker to being smoke-free, a good TCM practitioner can provide you with advice and suggestions for healthy lifestyle choices while treatment can help lessen your desire for cigarettes and control withdrawal symptoms.

1 Bier ID, Wilson J, Studt P, Shakleton M. "Auricular acupuncture, education and smoking cessation: a randomized, sham-controlled trial." Am J Public Health 2002 Oct;92(10):1642-7

2. He D, Medbo JI, Hostmark AT. "Effect of acupuncture on smoking cessation or reduction: an 8-month and 5-year follow-up study." Prev Med 2001 Nov;33(5): 364-72.

Disclaimer

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