



Acupuncture for the Little Ones

By Shoshanna Katzman

According to Chinese medicine, a child's natural, bountiful energy can be described as ample flow of Qi - a vital energy responsible for maintaining optimal wellness. If Qi becomes compromised, impeded or stuck - an energetic imbalance may arise leading to health problems. Excessive use of antibiotics, over consumption of de-natured foods as well as high stress can become the root cause for such impairment. Reversal is possible through acupuncture which increases Qi flow, eliminates blockages and rebalances the energy system to restore health. This is accomplished through insertion of tiny needles strategically placed into acupuncture points located along the energy pathways (meridians) of a child's body. According to government estimates an approximate 150,000 children in the United States received acupuncture in 2007. This age-old technique continues to become more prevalent

in treatment of children as the word spreads and years progress.

Some of the most common health problems improved through acupuncture include a first cold, colic, or acid reflux for infants; ear infections, night terrors, tantrums or stomachaches for toddlers; bedwetting, speech difficulty, failure to thrive, asthma or headaches for young children; attention deficit, fatigue, insomnia, anxiety, depression, allergies, excessive anger, hormonal imbalance, chronic pain or acne for adolescents/teens. Well-visits to an acupuncturist are also helpful to maintain energetic balance, warding off an energetic imbalance before it even arises. As stated in the ancient text Nei Jing Su Wen, "The superior physician treats those who are not yet sick; the ordinary physician treats those who are already sick".

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has not made an official stance on pediatric acupuncture;

however a large study published in its journal, Pediatrics, found it to be generally safe when performed by a skilled practitioner. A recent study conducted by pediatric pain management specialist Yuan-Chi Lin, M.D. at the Harvard-affiliated Children's Hospital in Boston found children between six months and 18 years of age to have reported less chronic pain than before treatment, increased attendance in school, better sleep and more participation in extracurricular activities. Dr. Lin also noted in his study that he helped children realize that acupuncture doesn't hurt by inserting needles into their parents first.

Children are quite pleased to find the acupuncture experience as surprisingly painless. Acupuncture needles are thin, solid needles inserted swiftly into the skin to minimize sensation, quite different from needles used for vaccinations or to draw blood. Receiving acupuncture between 6-12 months of age is ideal to minimize "needle shyness". Until the age of eight, acupuncture needles are retained for just moments yet after this age they are retained for 15-20 minutes. The shorter needling time is necessary due to the higher levels of Qi flowing through the meridians of younger children. The Chinese medicine "rule of thumb" is that it takes one month of treatment for every year that a problem has existed, thus treatment close to when symptoms arise is best to ensure timely resolve. Acupuncture empowers children to heal themselves naturally throughout this Qi restorative process. Acupuncture has given hope to thousands of children, bringing big, healthy smiles to their faces once again.

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