



# AGE-OLD HEALING for The Eyes

by Shoshanna Katzman

The best aspect about Chinese medicine is its strengthening effect on overall energetic health. As such, the age-old healing art of acupuncture is an excellent treatment option to slow down or even halt eye symptoms, especially when a visual impairment is of degenerative nature.

There is a growing body of successful clinical reports and research studies showing the effectiveness of acupuncture for treatment of many eye

problems. Some of the commonly treated conditions commonly include eyes that are swollen, dry, itchy, red, blurry, sore, or twitching and conditions such as conjunctivitis, optic neuritis or atrophy, as well as early-stage macular degeneration, cataract, and glaucoma.

Treatment through acupuncture works best to reverse, ameliorate or slow down progression when sought at the earliest possible stage of development, especially in the case of

visual impairment. When acupuncture is received at the change of seasons to restore energetic balance, health and well-being is maintained which helps ward off the possibility of an eye problem from taking form. This follows the tradition in China whereby therapy is typically sought for prevention. Unfortunately, the opposite is typical in the United States where people seek acupuncture treatment in desperation - "as a last resort."

For those with existing eye problems, a Chinese medicine approach involves treatment of the "root cause" of a condition, together with presenting symptoms. Acupuncture treatment for visual impairment and eye problems is applied locally around the eye to promote circulation of qi (vital energy) and blood to the area. Acupuncture is also applied on the body distally to the eyes, for which choice is dependent on an individual's particular symptoms, signs and constitution. Treatment of both the eyes themselves combined with boosting health of the entire body is what makes this Chinese medicine treatment to eye health so effective.

Chinese medicine also distinguishes an association between eye anatomy and its association with energetic health of the vital organs. For example, the upper and lower eyelid relates to the spleen, the iris relates to the liver, the conjunctiva relates to the lungs, the corners with the heart, and the pupils with the kidneys. One of the most common imbalances found with visual problems involve deficiency of the liver meridian. This is because the liver nourishes the eyes according to the Law of the Five Elements, as well as governing free flow of vital energy, thus blood throughout the body. In addition to balancing the energetics of the liver through acupuncture, it is beneficial for an individual to monitor levels of stress, minimize anger, and maximize nutrient rich, organic foods and supplementation for improved eye health.

The kidney meridian is also related because of its role in boosting immunity and "sparking energy" of every other vital organ. The immune system protects the eyes from being "invaded by external environmental factors". These include attack by excessive heat which leads to swelling, inflamma-

tion, ulceration or redness of the eyes; cold which causes pain and vision loss over time by blocking qi flow thereby depriving the eyes and surrounding muscles, vessels and skin around them of warmth and nourishment; wind which causes eyelid drooping, twitching or rapid onset of an acute condition such as vision loss; dampness which leads to mucus or swelling due to poor circulation to the eyes; dryness which causes dry, itchy, painful and red eyes; and lastly summer heat which is the cause of inflammation or discharge of mucus from the eyes. It is highly recommended for an individual to avoid these environmental extremes whenever possible in addition to strengthening kidney energy through acupuncture.

Eye health is also affected by a deficiency of spleen energy which is responsible for transformation and transportation of food throughout the body. When this function is impaired, not enough nutrition is transported upward to the eyes leading to future eye problems. In addition to acupuncture and Chinese herbs to strengthen spleen qi, proper nutrition is essential for optimal vision function. Spleen health can be further supported through elimination or limitation of sugar, caffeine, alcohol, fatty foods and other adulterated and de-natured foods.

An acupuncturist takes all these factors into consideration while determining an individual's Chinese medicine diagnosis and treatment strategy. Every person receives a distinct and unique treatment based upon their particular constitution. Acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Chinese dietary therapy in combination with qigong and/or tai chi exercise are excellent forms of Chinese medicine used in combination for health and healing - all age-old methods for bringing the body back to health through stimulation of its innate healing capability.

*Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S. is an acupuncturist, Chinese herbalist, and Tai Chi and Qigong Instructor. She is author of Qigong for Staying Young, co-author of Feeling Light and director of the Red Bank Acupuncture & Wellness Center in Shrewsbury, NJ. For more information, visit [www.healing4u.com](http://www.healing4u.com)*

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