



Chinese Medicine for Bladder Health

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S.

Chinese medicine has been an effective treatment for urinary symptoms such as frequency or lack of bladder control (incontinence) for thousands of years. Urinary incontinence is diagnosed as either stress incontinence, which occurs during exertion or sneezing and is attributed to weak pelvic floor muscles. Or as urge incontinence, which involves contraction of the pelvic floor muscles that puts pressure on the bladder. It is common for an individual to have a combination of both.

These conditions have the potential to significantly impair quality of life. Social stigma, embarrassment, lack of confidence and worry are common issues. And can lead to a lack of physical activity, isolation and even depression. Many individuals are so ashamed about this condition that they hide it from their physician - even though they are the first that should be consulted.

There is much to be gained from an integrated Western and Eastern approach for treating this health issue. Clinical research trials have found acupuncture to be successful in the treatment of stress incontinence and Overactive Bladder Syndrome, which causes a sudden urge to urinate and may lead to urge incontinence. Deputy Director at the US National Center for

Complementary and Integrative Medicine David Shurtleff states: "The research on acupuncture for stress incontinence suggests that acupuncture could be a reasonable and low-risk approach to try before attempting riskier, more invasive treatment such as surgery."

Attention needs to be focused on strengthening the pelvic floor muscles. Standard medicine has typically recommended Kegel exercises, which are a good place to begin depending on necessity. However, there are other methods for strengthening this area of the body for both men and women, which involves what is known as neuromuscular reeducation and myofascial release techniques. Fortunately, there are physical therapists that specialize in this treatment approach. The Chinese exercises of tai chi and qigong are additionally helpful for strengthening the pelvic floor muscles.

Acupuncture focuses on opening energies of the lower spine and sacrum while working with the underlying energetic cause. According to Chinese medicine, urinary issues most commonly stem from weakness in the qi (vital energy) of the kidney, which is said "to govern water." This means that the energetics of this organ system is responsible for metabolism of

water and urination as well as filtering urine. Kidney qi is further said to hold urine within the bladder - explaining its connection to an overactive bladder condition. This is particularly the case during the winter months as it is the season related to the energetics of the kidneys and bladder. Furthermore, acupuncture builds blood to nourish overall health and specifically to the bladder area. And it reduces inflammation, strengthens adrenals, balances hormones and calms the nervous system - all which play a role in regulation of urination.

Treatment may take some time to see results as energies need to be built up, so it is important to be patient with the process. It also depends on the length of time that one has experienced this problem combined with an individual's constitution and potential for healing. Strengthening of additional organ systems such as the spleen, lungs and liver may be necessary to obtain desired results. Dietary recommendations and/or weight management is also essential.

A food such as walnuts can be eaten to prevent incontinence through strengthening kidney essence. They can be eaten raw or added while preparing your oatmeal. Walnuts also help to prevent cough, which is helpful with stress incontinence that happens with coughing.

Other dietary recommendations include limiting or eliminating caffeine, alcohol, sugar substitutes and refined sugar. Stress reduction techniques and nutritional supplements are helpful. These include antioxidants such as vitamin C, vitamin E and alpha-lipoic acid as well as anti-inflammatories such as bromelain, quercetin and turmeric. Cranberry is a possible remedy due to its ability to prevent infection and inflammation of the urinary tract. Omega 3-fatty acids, probiotics and the Western herbs saw palmetto and uva ursi are recommended. Specific Chinese herbs help to strengthen the energetics of a particular organ system, increase circulation,

eliminate chronic inflammation, clear low grade infection and support tissue growth. It is best to consult an acupuncturist that is highly trained and certified in Chinese herbal medicine, rather than choosing an herbal formula on one's own.

Chinese medicine treatment is an individualized approach that works with a person as a whole. In doing so, it focuses on alleviation of symptoms along with addressing the root energetic cause. Although it is essential to keep prevention and early treatment in mind, improvement happens quicker and easier when Eastern and Western techniques are combined.

Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S. is an acupuncturist, Chinese herbalist, Tai Chi and Qigong Instructor as well as director of Red Bank Acupuncture & Wellness Center in Shrewsbury, NJ approaching 30 years. She is the author of Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20-Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy and co-author of Feeling Light: The Holistic Solution to Permanent Weight Loss and Wellness. For information visit www.healing4u.com and www.qigong4.us.



True Concepts • Hair Design

Where Beauty meets Nature



FREE relaxing Scalp Facial when you mention this ad. New Client Special!

Red Bank's Leading Organic & Vegan Salon

26 seconds is all it takes for chemicals in your personal care to enter your bloodstream.

> www.TrueConceptsHD.com 732.747.2200
> 220 W. Front St. • Red Bank

Bringing Smiles To The Holistic Community

0% Financing Available . Call Today! . Free Consultation



Brick, NJ

732.295.1616

John J. Tortora D.D.S. WWW.holisticsmilesNJ.com

Mercury-Free
Amalgam Removal With Safe Protocol
Disease Prevention Program
Safe Digital X-Rays Reduces Exposure By 90%
Cosmetic Dentistry
Porcelain Veneers
Invisalign



The Clear Alternative to Braces