

You & Your Feet

by Shoshanna Katzman



Our feet are a precious component of our body as we depend on them for standing and walking along with running, jumping, kicking and a variety of other movements. Working together with the force of gravity, it is important to be cognizant of harmonizing the placement of our feet with our hand movement. Ballet dancers spend countless hours honing this skill along with keeping their feet in good shape – after all, where would they be without them.

Taiji and Qigong practitioners work toward dropping their weight downward through the soles of their feet and into the earth to establish deep rooting. Going barefoot and walking attentively on the grass is another excellent exercise for increased grounding and heightened connection to the earth. Moreover, many people enjoy having their feet worked on during a therapeutic massage, reflexology session or pedicure and some are fortunate to have their feet rubbed by their partners before going to bed. Chinese medicine tradition further recommends that this be accompanied by a warm foot bath to ensure a peaceful and restful night's sleep.

Choosing the right shoes for adequate support combined with proper body mechanics are important when engaging in athletics or simply moving throughout the day. This is especially helpful when finding oneself at a standing desk or waiting in a line for an extended period. Being vigilant about maintaining health of the 38 bones and numerous tendons and ligaments that comprise each foot is important. The ultimate goal is to reinforce their

complex structure and make your feet less prone to injury. When and if injury happens, whether acute or chronic, it is a smart decision to turn to an acupuncturist for help.

Acupuncture is surprisingly painless and receiving a treatment has the potential to bring you into a deep state of relaxation and healing. It involves the insertion of tiny, hair-thin needles into the skin to stimulate the opening of energy flow within the body. The needles are strategically placed by an acupuncturist on the feet and other areas of the body to release energetic blockages and restore proper flow of qi and blood within the meridian pathways that traverse the feet. There are many key acupuncture points for an acupuncturist to choose from such as bafeng which are four extra acupuncture points located between the toes, kidney 1 (yongquan) on the soles of the feet, liver 3 (taichong) on the top of the foot and bladder 60 (kunlun) on the outside of the foot near the ankle bone.

Research studies have shown that acupuncture can be beneficial for various types of foot pain associated with the ankle, heel and ball of the foot. In terms of a Western medical perspective, pain relief is achieved through stimulation of the nervous system which then sends a signal to the brain to release endorphins. Whereas Chinese medicine teaches us that positive outcome is gained through restoring free flow of qi (vital energy) via opening blocked energy and reducing inflammation. Common complaints that acupuncture is well-known for treating include generalized foot, ankle or heel pain, plantar fasciitis, heel spurs, plantar warts and bunions. This ancient treatment modality is excellent for promoting the healing of a sprain or torn

ligaments of the ankle. It is also effective for stimulating the knitting of bones. Of course, it is essential to consult a podiatrist or orthopedic physician first and foremost in such cases.

Be sure to find an acupuncturist who is highly trained and experienced at working with the feet. Ask that they come to the phone so you can pose questions to them about your specific condition. Know that the number of treatments needed is often-times based on the amount of time you have had a problem in addition to the severity of an injury. It is a good idea to give acupuncture a try. You really don't know what it can do until you get on the table, relax and allow the needles to stimulate your innate healing ability.

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