

BEATING THE WINTER BLUES

Acupuncture can boost the immune system; relieve the symptoms of asthma and arthritis as well as helping to cope with Seasonal Affective Disorder

With the arrival of shorter daylight hours and cold, damp weather many of us start to feel a worsening of health problems. Achy joints start to stiffen up and cause nagging pain. Coughs and colds are commonplace, with some people finding that no sooner have they got rid of one cold than they are getting another. Asthma patients frequently find a worsening of symptoms as winter sets in as do people who experience Rhinitis. Sufferers of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) find the period after the clocks have gone back an especially difficult time of year.

For the fortunate few an extended break to the sun can be the answer for surviving the winter blues but for the rest of us we need to adopt other coping strategies. One approach that can help is a visit to an acupuncturist who is fully qualified in the understanding and application of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) .

An acupuncturist trained in Chinese medicine can address many of the day-to-day illnesses that we take to our GPs and can offer both prevention and treatment. Acupuncture balances the energy within the body by the insertion of fine needles into carefully chosen points situated along meridian channels. By correcting the energetic balance of the patient the immune system – know as Defensive Qi (pronounced chee) - is enhanced. Many patients notice that their propensity to catch coughs and colds is greatly reduced after a course of treatments as well as an overall increase in energy.

Asthma patients often notice a worsening of their condition at this time of year but perhaps have not even considered the notion that acupuncture could help. As a long-term sufferer of asthma, my own experience can vouch for its effectiveness. I no longer have to use a daily steroid inhaler or carry an adrenalin reliever with me. The fear of xmas parties with their smoky environments and the catching of colds – all triggers for my asthma – have now disappeared with regular acupuncture treatment.

Sufferers of arthritis and rheumatism can find the onset of cold, damp weather particularly distressing. Many patients comment “it’s as if the damp gets inside of me” or “I feel cold from the inside and can’t get warm”. In Chinese medicine this is a close interpretation of what can cause symptoms such as swelling, stiffness of joints and achy pain. An experienced acupuncturist will use a herb known as moxa during treatment, which is either placed on a needle, put onto the skin or pressed into a stick, and then warmed over the body. In many cases this can bring an instant relief to discomfort although a course of treatments will generally be needed to clear a persistent condition.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is now a recognized condition where people can experience anything from feeling low to being extremely depressed. Many of the symptoms experienced by sufferers are treatable with acupuncture. These include sleep problems, fatigue, low mood, anxiety and poor appetite including a craving for sweet foods

Denise Muirhead is a licensed acupuncturist and a member of the British Acupuncture Council. She can be contacted on 01344 456107

<http://holmegrangeclinic.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/>