

# *Acupuncture and Children*

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How many people realize how much acupuncture treatments can help children rid themselves of unwanted illness? Rearing children without overuse of antibiotics, ear tubes, allergy shots, and excessive use of OTC and prescription medications can be a daunting task. If western society understood how effective these treatments are for children unnecessary suffering could be avoided. For centuries, acupuncture has been a natural, safe and effective treatment for people young and old alike.



Life-threatening pediatric illnesses must of course be treated with western allopathic medicines; however acupuncture and other alternative therapies must not be overlooked as viable treatment options for children. The acupuncture approach views the existence of symptoms or disease as a result of the body being out of balance. This is based on the concept of Qi, pronounced *chee*, the vital energy that flows through 14 main meridians pathways traversing within the human body. The Chinese believe that a meridian blockage or deficient Qi flow causes ill health in the body. Acupuncture treatments are done to remove Qi blockages and strengthen the flow of Qi to restore health.

An acupuncturist determines a Chinese diagnosis during an initial consultation to determine which meridian needs balancing in order to restore health to the body. A practitioner gathers symptoms and sign exhibited by the patient and formulates them into a differential diagnosis to determine the course of treatment, usually 10 to 15 sessions received over several months depending upon the child's health status, duration of problems combined with severity. Upon completion of this treatment series a re-evaluation is done to determine the need for additional courses of treatment. Conditions such as chronic ear infections, allergic reactions, digestive disturbance, acute and chronic pain, athletic and dance injuries, asthma, chronic colds or flu, obesity, chronic fatigue syndrome, failure to thrive, migraines and ADHD are some of the more common pediatric problems that acupuncture is used successfully to treat.



According to Chinese medicine, a child's constitution and level of vital energy is determined before birth during the first few months of pregnancy. After birth, parents need to further help their child by feeding them a continuous supply of energy to complete the development of their meridians. If children don't receive this special energetic attention from their parents they can become experience ill health. Based on the Five Element Theory, a child's health is dependent on the physical and emotional health of their parents. A common practice for an acupuncturist is thus "to treat the mother to treat the child." This combined with the treatment of the child helps a child heal mentally, physically and emotionally as it balances and strengthens Qi flow within the meridians.

## Acupuncture & Children

The following explains some specific Chinese medicine views of pediatric diagnosis and treatment strategy:

- \* *stomach and spleen energy, which governs transportation and transformation of food, is more delicate and weak*
- \* *liver energy, which governs free flow of Qi, is often out of balance*
- \* *blood and Qi converge in the hands and feet of young children*
- \* *yin aspect is insufficient*
- \* *vital organs are fragile, soft, clear and spirited*
- \* *Qi easily leaves its path within the meridians*
- \* *illness happens easily and become serious quickly*
- \* *health is regained easily and quickly*



The experience of visiting an acupuncturist is a major step toward a child's healing process. A child can have their consultation without siblings present to provide special time with their parent(s). What can't be easily expressed at home, can become clearly and swiftly verbalized in the presence of a compassionate and intuitive health professional. This experience empowers the child to resolve their health issues and promotes healing purpose. Future visits can become a favorite special time together for the parent(s) and child. Some children prefer to receive treatments alone and thrive on independence in this way, others come with their entire family and enjoy taking turns watching each other receive treatment.

Children typically get sick quickly and heal quickly. Acupuncture is an excellent treatment choice to help them heal even quicker. Teaching a child early on that their bodies are able to heal on their own is a tremendous gift, one they can turn to for the rest of their life.

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