

Acu News

"The journey is the reward" - Chinese Proverb

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Acupuncture and HIV

More than 1 million Americans are living with human immunodeficiency virus, known as HIV. HIV is not curable, although many live long lives after being initially infected. HIV destroys the body's T-cells, which makes it harder to fight off infections and disease.

Acupuncture can help promote immunity, treat side effects of medications, and be a complementary therapy for HIV treatment. Many patients with HIV/AIDS suffer from pain and anxiety. Acupuncture can help lower stress in patients as well as pain that results from their decreased immune system.

Patients have found that acupuncture can help relieve symptoms of fatigue, chest tightness, flu-like symptoms and digestion issues that are associated with HIV. Acupuncture proves to improve quality of life for those living with HIV and increase their energy level and mood. Treatment can lower stress and anxiety levels, which are usually high in HIV patients due to the nature of such a serious disease.

Because there are not only physical effects of HIV, but mental and emotional as well, acupuncture is a great complementary treatment to help both the body and mind handle the changes that are occurring because of the illness. Being diagnosed with HIV can be traumatizing in itself, acupuncture treatment can help calm the mind and improve overall quality of life. Although HIV is not curable, it can be managed.

"Acupuncture is one additive method of maintenance, which can help improve the quality of life for patients with HIV through balancing the forces through an individualized baseline." - Claudia Briones

Professionals have concluded that patients who are stressed, anxious

and depressed can adversely affect their health. For this reason, acupuncture works well to lower these feelings.

Most people with HIV are taking some sort of medication to help their T-cell count. Because acupuncture treatment is completely natural and involves no drugs, it can be used at the same time as Western medicine to help manage symptoms and side effects.

Acupuncture works by addressing the body as a whole. When the body's natural energy flow is blocked or stagnated due to illness, an individual does not have optimal health. Treatment works by returning the body back to its natural flow and restoring health to organs and the entire body and mind.

A study done at the University of Boston found that acupuncture treatment improved overall quality of life in HIV patients.

It is believed in Traditional Chinese Medicine that HIV, which causes a high susceptibility to infections, are heat toxins in the body and burn the system out, damaging the cooling part of the body. This causes an imbalance between yin and yang in the body. This imbalance is a disruption in the body's qi, or natural energy flow.

"CAM treatments are supportive rather than curative by nature, which helps an individual with HIV not feel like they are in limbo between life and death, but rather feeling, and truly being, alive." - *Complementary Therapies for the Treatment of HIV: In Search of the Evidence. International Journal of STD and AIDS.*

Contact an acupuncturist today if you or someone you know is living with HIV and wants to consider a natural, safe, complementary treatment.



Alternative Treatments to Support HIV

Complementary and alternative medicine can have great effects in helping those dealing with HIV. Acupuncture, herbal treatments and other alternative medicines have found to especially help side effects from medication for HIV, as well as feelings of depression and anxiety someone with HIV may be dealing with.

The National Institutes of Health gave almost \$520 million to the complementary and alternative medicine field in 2010. Included in government-sponsored trials were potential HIV therapies such as acupuncture, yoga and Reiki.

Yoga & massage to reduce pain

HIV patients deal with chronic pain, sometimes it can be debilitating. It is easy to turn to painkillers to help the pain, but these can lead to even more problems like dependency. Yoga and massage are natural alternatives that can be used to reduce pain. Massage helps relax the muscles and can help decrease joint and muscle pain. Massage is also a great mental relaxer as well.

Yoga can help improve overall health and peace of mind. Yoga positions and stretches can help mobilize the body and at the same time reduce tension areas.

Foods that can help reduce symptoms

- Eat foods rich in B-vitamins, calcium, iron. Common foods that have high amounts of these vitamins and minerals include almonds, beans, whole grains, spinach and kale.
- Antioxidant-rich food such as blueberries, cherries, bell peppers and squash.
- Take fish oil to help reduce inflammation and promote the immune system.
- Consider probiotics, probiotic supplements help support gastrointestinal and immune health.
- Green tea: has antioxidant and immune-strengthening benefits
- Maitake mushroom: Maitake mushroom also has immune and antiviral effects. Another way to take the mushroom is by an extract, which you can find at a local health store.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is used to help alleviate common symptoms of HIV like fatigue, insomnia and nausea. There are almost no side effects to acupuncture and is completely natural. Acupuncture can also help pain management and anxiety and stress caused by HIV.



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