Patient Help Sheet

Acupressure for Digestion: *Press to Digest!*

"A man grows most tired while standing still." - Chinese Proverb

In TCM theory, digestion represents the central axis around which everything else revolves. It provides our main source of (post-natal) energy from the breakdown and absorption of food. Even minor disruptions in this system can progress to significant and varied health problems.

Treatment, of course, depends on the severity of the problem. As long as emergency situations are ruled out or addressed, one can turn to Chinese medicine for prevention, treatment and maintenance. And the power of self-care can never be understated. Acupressure is one of our best self-care tools when used appropriately. While the needles (and the added effect of electrostimulation of needles) are generally considered a stronger approach to energy medicine than acupressure, acupressure alone has proved extremely beneficial. For example, in a study of 70 hemodialysis patients with constipation where acupressure was administered 3 times/week for 4 weeks, there was a significant improvement in bowel function [1].

3 ACUPRESSURE POINTS THAT YOU CAN PRESS TO HELP YOU DIGEST:

LARGE INTESTINE 4: "union valley"

Location: fleshy (and often achy) depression between the thumb and first finger

Use to: regulate intestinal function.

Stimulation of this point has been shown to both increase and decrease gastric motility depending on what's needed. [2] So, it can be used for both constipation and diarrhea.

CONCEPTION VESSEL 12: "middle controller"

Location: about 4 inches above navel

Use to: regulate stomach function, support energy

It has been shown to cause muscle relaxation via the somatosympathetic pathway, and inhibits gastric acid secretion which is extremely beneficial to GERD patients. [3]

STOMACH 36: "3 mile leg"

Location: about 3 inches below knee cap and about 1 inch towards outer edge of leg

Use to: strengthen digestion, build blood and immunity

According to some studies, it may improve upper and lower abdominal symptoms by restoring impaired 'slow waves' of the digestive tract via the vagal pathway. Electroacupuncture on this channel has been shown to enhance gastric motility and blood flow by regulating hormones (such as motilin and somatostatin) that directly affect digestion. [4]

Benefits have been shown to be intensity dependent, so massage these points as often as needed, and just to be sure, get in for some acupuncture where we can give these points the extra attention they may need. Make your appointment today!

A Fine Balance Health Care
Stacey King
2117 Summerfield Blvd. Airdrie AB.
403-540-8878
www.afinebalancehealthcare.ca

[1] https://www.healthline.com/health/acupressure-points-for-gas

[2] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4507100/

[3] https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16799881/

[4] hhttps://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26217082/#:~:text=The%20dual%20regulatory%20effects%20of,motility%20may%20be%20intensity%2Ddependent.

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