Liver Qi stagnation is probably one of the most common Chinese medicine patterns we see in clinical practice. Today I wanted to talk about its symptoms, the consequences if it's not addressed, the root cause, and treatment, including acupuncture points, formula, and food.

Welcome to AcuPro, a show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I'm your host Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students like you in changing the world one patient at a time. My goal is to share my passion for TCM and empower you to achieve superior patient care.

I love to showcase the amazing benefits of acupuncture because after all, acupuncture rocks!

Let's start with going back to foundation. My teacher back in school used to say to me, if you don't understand something or you can't grasp why, go back to foundation. So let's look at the function of the TCM liver system as a whole. It's function first and foremost is to allow better flow of Qi.

Flow of QI is depending on the liver, the better the liver flows for the Qi, because liver moves Qi the better, supple and easy moving we would be.

That's why the liver is also in charge of tendons, ligaments, sinews, and joints.

If there is tight joints or joint issue, we also have to look at the liver. The liver opens into the eyes it reflects into the eyes. Red eyes, eye twitch, we have to look at the liver itself.

The next thing is livers in charge of storing blood specifically for menstruation. When it comes to women, if they're having scanty bleeding or amenorrhea or not enough blood, we can look at the liver or if there's a lot of cramping, clots and dysmenorrhea. We can also look at liver.

The other function of liver is that it reflects into the nails. We look at the color, if it's brittle, if it's purple, if the nails are very pale. That gives us clues on what's happening with the liver.

And the other function that is part of the liver is that it is in charge. our vision, our goals. So whatever we wanna manifest, whatever we want to have happen, we need to make goals to make it happen. So being in control of having a vision of planning, whatever we're trying to accomplish or achieve that is the liver.

Next. Let's look at the cause of liver qi stagnation. Before we look at the causes, let's remind ourselves of the symptoms. Often the symptoms are very subtle, but they are there.

So one of the main symptoms since. Livers in charge of moving qi and good flow is tension, right? Shoulder tension. Neck tension maybe tight hip flexors as well. Tight ankles. So our whole body is not relaxed. It's more tense.

The second thing is often for women is. Symptoms prior to menstruation. So PMS or pre-menstruation syndrome, usually including breast tenderness, more bloating having more mood swings clumsy and feeling irritable, right? So that comes as a PMS.

However, the rest of the time for everybody, other liver qi stagnation symptoms would be impatience. Not having any patience. One time I ask a patient, are you stressed? And she said, no, I'm not. I'm not at all.

And she got irritable with me and I said, are you sure? And she goes, no. It's just that everyone around me is stupid. And I said, is everyone around you is stupid? Like everyone. And then she looked at me and she. Okay. Maybe I'm irritable and I'm stressed. So sometimes people are so used to being impatient or irritable, easily or frustrated.

They don't see it, that it comes from stress and sometimes there could be years of stress, right? The pulse will be wiry. mostly on the left side because liver is in the middle, left side of the pulse. And the tongue will not change, so the tongue will stay pink. Or if we have another pattern, then it will show the other pattern.

Liver qi stagnation's root cause is stress. Stress will start by tensing, tightening the body. And it'll show with clenching the jaw as well because our body automatically will be tense even at night while we sleep. So stress is the number one root cause of liver qi stagnation.

Another one because we said it's about flow and freely flowing. is a lack of movement. So if someone has no exercise and they sit in front of the computer all day long and they don't move much, eventually they'll get liver qi stagnation and because it's in charge of the flow of qi, usually we have, good bowel movement, good digestive system cuz it's flowing with people sitting and not moving at all.

They have tendency to have bloating at the end of the day it's getting worse. So we have a lot of bloating that can due to many different patterns, right? But if it's a liver qi

stagnation, bloating, it's the bloating that you close your pants in the morning, but by the day goes, it gets. Bigger bloating and by the end of the day you cannot feel your pants.

They're so tight, you wanna open them. So the bloating increases with the day, and that's a liver qi stagnation. And usually the next morning the bloating is right back down. So when it comes to liver qi stagnation, root cause stress and lack of movements are the two main.

consequences of not addressing liver qi stagnation is gonna lead to more issue, and that's why it's important to address it. What are the consequences of liver qi stagnation if it's not addressed? The most common one is liver yang rising. Liver Yang Rising is the next stage where we have liver qi stagnation.

We are tense, we are stressed, but now we get more symptoms. The more stress is put upon us, the more symptoms we get. We start getting temporal headaches. At the end of the day, we start having maybe red eyes. We wake up in the night between one and three AM . However, we are able to fall back asleep. The tongue might have a bit of red sides because the yang rises, so heat rises, we feel warmer, more irritable, more angry.

We're short-fused much more than with liver qi stagnation, like a volcano exploding and then coming back down. That's liver yang rising. The next level after that, which is worse is liver fire. So now we're constantly upset, constantly mad. We now have hot temporal headache every day. And when you put a cold compress, it feels better.

Because there is fire. Fire rises. We may get High blood pressure, constant red, bloodshot eyes. Now if we wake up at night, between one and three, we will not be able to fall back asleep. We are gonna stay up and we are gonna be quite warm most of the night. Also because there's fire dries fluids, so there may be constipation. Bitter taste in the mouth.

The tongue now is gonna be red. And it may have a really dry yellow coat on it. The pulse will be wiry rapid with liver. yang rising, usually the pulse is wiry. It can go rapid and come back down. But with liver fire, it's constantly wiry rapid.

The third one that can occur is liver blood stasis. So liver blood stagnation or liver blood stasis is the consequences of liver qi stagnation because liver moves qi , but qi moves blood. Blood is material. It cannot move unless there's energy. There's qi to move it, right? So if we have liver qi stagnation that is there for a long time, eventually it may lead

to blood stagnation, which is a worse condition in T C M perspective because now there's gonna be pain.

Fixed pain that could be dysmenorrhea, could be clots in the blood with really bad cramping. Instead of shoulder tension, you have that shoulder knot back there that's so painful. You just want to take it out. It's so stabbing pain, or you have stabbing headache like just so strong. And it's pounding and pounding, right?

The tongue would be purple. And the pulse will be wary, choppy. Those consequences are very much excess. However, this deficiency that can occur from liver qi stagnation because the liver in Chinese medicine or wood element, which the liver correspond to the wood element, the wood controls the earth in Chinese medicine, which means that liver controls spleen and stomach, right?

When liver qi stagnates and there's a lot of stress, a very common pattern is wood overacts on earth over control, overact on earth, and that can lead to two different patterns, either spleen qi deficiency or stomach qi rebelling.

Those are the two that it can lead to.

When there is a lot of stress, for some people it will go more towards the spleen, meaning the liver stagnation will suppress the spleen energy and the spleen is gonna become deficient. When there's a lot of stress, people will say, oh, I lost my appetite.

I don't want to eat. I have loose stools all the time. It's like that ibs, right? IBS, Liver qi stagnation, overacting on spleen creating spleen qi deficiency. Irritable bowel syndrome is a constipation, alternating of diarrhea. That is a liver overact on spleen, so that's very common as well. The person will be fatigued.

All the stress, they worry so much that it's exhausting them and spleen qi becomes deficient. The other one could happen and both can happen, but often it is like when there is liver qi stagnation, it overacts or over controls the stomach. And now because stomach has tendency to go excess versus spleen and tendency to go deficiency now it creates stomach qi rebelling.

And if stomach qi is rebelling, we have symptoms of constant nausea, feeling like a knot in our stomach. Maybe acid reflux, right? This is very common when people are stressed. Acid reflux will make it worse, right? We may have a bad breath, we may have tendency to have acid regurgitation. Food will be really hard to digest, we're hungry all the time craving and we're just eating anything and everything.

Those are the consequences that liver qi stagnation can, lead to. One more is the creation of excess fluid. Okay. Specifically phlegm and dampness as well. I have a whole video on phlegm and dampness. The difference in how do we differentiate them, but no matter what, it's excess mucus, excess body fluid. When there is no movement, again, when liver is not able to move qi. It's stagnated. Then the fluids are not properly moving, and because they're not properly moving, they accumulate.

And now we have excess dampness or excess phlegm. But liver qi stagnation can amplify it, make it worse. And so then we have a lot of mucus. This is why even though it's super easy to treat liver qi stagnation with Chinese medicine it has consequences that are massively impactful on the body and on the health of our patients.

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It is the It's a game changer for acupuncture students and specifically for practitioners. You can download the digital version on any device and it comes with many video links to complement it. Or, you If you're like me and you'd rather have a hard copy version, the publisher ships it all over the world.

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Now let's go back to liver qi stagnation treatment. Before we talk about points and all the treatments that we can offer in Chinese medicine.

Let's talk about how to educate the patient in managing stress and reducing the stress. It's important that patients found the way that helps them reduce stress. It could be yoga, tai chi, exercising, meditating, journaling, reading, playing with their kids, going to walk the dog, whatever it is. They need to take the time every day.

For that breath, take breaths, right? Breathing, exercise, and calming all that stress. That's really important.

And then we can come in with acupuncture. And acupuncture is one of the best way to treat liver qi technician because it puts the patient into a parasympathetic state, because most patients, when they come in, they have been stressed and they've been on the fight or flight.

So putting them on the rest and recover state or the parasympathetic state is really important. That's what acupuncture. It helps the body self-regulate.

The best point for liver qi stagnation is liver three. Specifically if we combine liver three with large intestine four, ally four and liver three are great because they're called the four gates, right?

Two points on each side. Two on the hand between the first and second metacarpal and two on the feet between the first and second metatarsal, so it's the same area. They open the flow of qi and blood because liver three moves, qi and large intestine four moves blood. The other point that we use a lot, that is such a good point as well, is gallbladder 34.

It is really good for the joints to allow better flow, relaxing the shoulders and the shoulder tension or the temporal headache. You can use this during pregnancy or anytime. It's such a powerful, strong point. So those are my favorite point to look at when it comes to the basic.

Of course you can. The backshu point of liver, bladder 18, you can add up the front-mu point of liver. Liver 14. You can add up any other point that is basically needed by each patient's symptoms. Spleen six is such a good point for liver qi stagnation as well. Again, not doing pregnancy because Spleen six not only moves liver qi, but it also strengthens spleen if liver is over controlling spleen. So it is a really good point to add

for better movement of liver qi as well. Good. And of course, if the person is stressed, you can do yin tang and ear shenmen and any point to calm the mind.

The second thing is looking at formulas. So let's look at formulas. There are a lot of formulas that can help with the qi technician. I think that acupuncture is usually enough, but let's look at the formulas. So the first formula, that's the most common formula is Chai Hu Shugan San . And again, I'm sorry, I don't pronounce Chinese very well.

I'm French speaking English and teaching Chinese is fantastic. I love it. Okay, so Chai Hu Shugan San. Means Chai Hu is the king herb in the formula and the king herb Chai Hu is Bupleurum in English or in Latin, I should say. Shugan is liver. So Shugan San is powder. Means, means soothe calm, relax. The liver powder. Chau Hu relax the liver or soothe the liver powder. So this is a really good formula for Liver Qi stagnation to de-stress as a great easy formula to take. The other very common formula is Xiao Yao San. This is one of the most common formula in TCM overall, and Xiao Yao San is often translated. Again, San means powder as rambling powder or free and easy wanderer powder.

So free and easy wanderer, right? It's the opposite of the flow of Qi. That's tight, it's freeing, it's wandering, it's happy. So Xiao Yao San is for Liver qi stagnation when it's overacting on spleen and making spleen deficient. This is definitely the formula for it. So those two are the most common formulas.

Last but not least, food that is great for liver qi stagnation because after all, food is medicine. When it comes to liver qi stagnation, I think the most important thing is to not overeat big meals that are gonna sit there, right?

Because that doesn't allow for better flow. So what we wanna do is have meals. Make us 80% full. Not a hundred percent, 80% full, which means satisfied, but not feeling like our pants are gonna explode and just burst out, right? The second thing is alcohol makes liver worse. So we don't want, obviously in the Western sense, the liver organ does not like alcohol, right?

But in TCM perspective, it is not helpful because alcohol brings more heat and liver tendency to have a lot of heat issues like liver yang, rising liver fire has a lot of excess heat easily, or liver in deficiency for that matter, right? So we wanna avoid things that are gonna cause a lot of heat.

However, we still wanna put a little bit of spice to get some movement and something that is warm, maybe not hot. But warm, like marjoram, like basil, like lemon grass, right?

Those are great. You wanna add up food that is really easy to digest as well, that is going to flow easily. Apple cider vinegar, sour food like lemon.

Granny Smith, apple raspberries are very good for the liver as well. I hope that was really useful and that helps you understand the whole liberty cheese stagnation cuz it's so common.

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