

My dad died when I was five years old and I had chronic constipations over 30 years since I was a child. So today I'm going to share my story and journey dealing with this chronic disorder and how I overcame it.

Chronic constipation effect. Approximately 20% of the world adult population. It is much more common in women and 33% of adults over 60 years old have chronic constipation.

So this is really prevalent. This is why today I'm going to share the causes of common digestive system symptoms. How we look at the digestive system, according to Chinese medicine, and then I'll share the 15, most powerful acupuncture point for digestive issues, including for. Upper digestive tract symptoms, such as acid reflux heartburns and also, and lower digestive tract symptoms. Like diarrhea, constipation, and so much more.

And if you still struggling with your TCM diagnosis, I will share a basic points combo that can be applied effectively in your practice for any digestive system issue. Are you ready? Oh, let's go.

Welcome to Acupuncture, 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!

What are the most common digestive disorders seen in patients irritable bowel syndrome. I see this in practice all the time. Acid reflux, chronic constipation. Peptic ulcers, inflammatory bowel disease, gallstones, celiac disease, diverticulitis, chronic diarrhea, and so much more. Bloating is also a major symptoms we see as acupuncturists.

It's crucial to remember that our goal is always to treat the root cause not just apply a treatment as a bandaid solution. This is the strength of our medicine. When we look at treating digestive system disorders, we have first to address the root cause. Alleviate the symptoms. Restore balance to the digestive system and specifically provide nutrition or diet and lifestyle recommendation.

This is really important because the digestive system is at the center of our health and nutrition. It's what's going to help our body heal as well. Right. Food is medicine.

As acupuncturists, we have a lot of tools in our disposition, specifically dietary, which we can mandate, but also herbal medicine. And And of course acupuncture. Now it's really crucial that we remember we are educators and we are going to give recommendation to our patients to address the stress, their sleep, and any factor that may contribute to digestive system issues.

Does that make sense? But obviously we also have to think of our limitation or consider that TCM has limitation as well. And we recognize the need for integrative care is specially for severe conditions. In some case, Western medical intervention may be necessary alongside TCM to help managing the problem.

By following our TCM diagnosis. We can develop a tailored treatment plan for each patient. However, it's not always easy to get the right diagnosis.

We all know that. So today I'm going to share the 15 most common acupuncture points that are going to help us in founding harmony in the digestive system.

Before we start, let's talk about causes because we always have to look for the root cause of the problem right now, pathogen invasion, bacteria viruses, parasites can cause long-term chronic digestive issues. e.Coli is one of them, right? Parasites are very common. So this is something that we can look into.

And for us it would be damp heat or damp cold, or any pathogen that invades the body and create some acute problem. But eventually it could lead into chronic issues. So today I'm going to talk mostly about chronic issue, not

necessarily acute. The second cause is emotion. Emotion is a massive, massive cause of issues. Ulcers for example, a direct effect from stress, right?

People's stress so much that they literally create a hole in the stomach lining. And that's an ulcer. So longstanding emotions will create some digestive system issue. Irritable bowel syndrome is a big one, right? Most people when they're stressed, they get this alternative. Diarrhea constipation back and forth for.

This is often due to stress or stress leads to more of it. The next one is lifestyle diet of course can create issues. If we have in non nutritious diet, irregular meals, not being mindful when we eat. And also weak essence, like people that have celiac disease, usually it's passed on from generation and it's really difficult to treat.

We can manage it, but it is a problem in absorption, right? Now, another one we don't think about is smoking. My mom smoked for 60 years. When smokers inhale, the smoke goes through the esophagus. To reach the lung, but it affects your esophagus and reaches the stomach lining.

And a lot of smokers will have acid reflux. It's very common. Sometimes we don't think of that. Right? So there are many causes and factors that increase digestive system disorders.

Now let's look at the digestive system, according to TCM. It is viewed as a complex network involving several organs with the spleen and the stomach being at the center.

The Zhong Qi. Z H O N G Qi. Zhong Qi means the middle Qi because the digestive system is at the center of our health in the middle of our body and spleen and stomach. I considered part of the Zhong Qi. So usually the spleen and stomach are the primary organ for digestion and TCM.

The spleen is responsible for transforming nutrients and transporting them into, throughout the body for energy. For mental energy, physical energy for muscle strength or muscle recovery. It literally distributes nutrients

everywhere. For clear thinking in the brain. And the spleen also manages dampness in the body, specifically water metabolism in the digestive system.

Now the stomach gets counterpart works in tandem with this spleen to receive the food breaks it down. Ripen and rots the food breaks it down for the spleen to further filter. Does that make sense? Now the liver also plays a significant role in digestion, according to Chinese medicine, if we have a smooth flow of Qi throughout the body.

Then we have a good digestive system and we're not constipated. It's not stagnated. Right? A lot of people that sit all day, no, she is not moving or people that never exercise their qi is not moving. And that can lead to chronic constipation as well, because there's not enough flow of Qi. Now stress, also can create some Qi stagnation as well.

The large intestine is important as well because it eliminates the waste. It lets go of what we don't need. Plus it is going to reabsorb fluid and it's where in Western sense, we absorb a lot of our nutrients, specifically minerals, right? Now the small intestine and TCM involve more separating the pure from the unpure or turbid substances that are body fluid.

So this is more related to body fluid. The small intestine will separate the good body fluid. So the spleen can redistribute it all over the body with the lung and then the fluid we don't need, which is the turbid one. It will be sent further down to the bladder, which is excreted as urination. The last one is the gallbladder, the gallbladder aids in digestion of fats.

So it's really important as well.

So yes, I get this question all the time. What happened if the gallbladder was taken out, the physical organ is gone, but the energy is still there.

However it means that the whole gallbladder system and TCM is a little bit weaker because it is missing that physical entity.

Now we also have to remember that earth spleen and stomach in the five element theory is the mother of metal. Lung and large intestine. So there's a big connection there from the digestive system and the immune system.

This is why we have our probiotics are prebiotics in the gut, in the large intestine. If we have a strong digestive system, we should have a really strong immune system because earth generates metal or the digestive system. Spleen and stomach generates lung and large intestine.

Right? This is a really good connection.

So now that we understand how to TCM sees the digestive system, we are going to use the acupuncture points specifically of the stomach, of the spleen, of the liver, of the gallbladder, right. Of all those entities we just discussed, which makes sense.

So let's start with general treatment. This is a powerhouse point combination that you can use for any digestive system disorders, upper digestive tract, lower digestive tract.

It doesn't matter. It will help and make a difference. It will be better if you have a TCM diagnosis and follow it, but you can start with stomach 36 because it's the command a point of the digestive system. And immune system as well. So it really reinforces the gut. Spleen six, because it's a crossing point of liver, kidney and spleen Meridian.

The spleen is in charge of digestion. So spleen six is great. But if the digestive system has been weak for many years, Then kidney could be affected. And if there is a lot of stress or liver qi stagnation, then spleen six also crosses the liver. So this is a very powerful point specifically, if there is digestive system issue. Caused by longstanding emotional stress.

The third one is liver 13. Liver 13 is the front mu point of the spleen. And it's the influential point of the Zang organ so it's fantastic when it comes to digestive system issues. So your three general points are going to be stomach 36, spleen six and liver 13. Perfect to be the foundation of our digestive treatment, regardless of your specific diagnosis.

Are you an acupuncture student feeling overwhelmed by the vast TCM knowledge required for exams and boards? You're not alone. I remember those crazy exam days back in 2003, and yes, the struggle was super real. This is why I created a powerful exam prep tool designed to boost your confidence and ensure your success.

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Now let's look specifically at the upper digestive track. GERD or gastroesophageal reflux disease. Is estimated to affect 20% of the population in Western countries. So really this is something we see in practice a lot.

I see a lot of people with acid reflux, heartburn, nausea that is chronic specifically with a lot of anxiety, right? This is so. Common. Let's talk about this in TCM perspective. It is a stomach qi rebelling, right? The stomach qi is going the wrong way. So, what are the best point when it comes to stomach qi rebelling?

We can have stomach heat and I have an entire video on stomach heat on how to distinguish stomach heat versus stomach fire.

That video, I discussed a whole treatment and how to really differentiate stomach heat and address it.

The five points I'm going to mention right now are the key acupuncture points for the upper digestive track in general. Number one. Liver 14 liver 14 is

excellent for upper digestive discomfort, specifically nausea, gallbladder, pain, acid reflux, and vomiting because it's the front mu point of the liver.

As in the liver organ. And the liver organ is really going to be effected. If we have a nutrition or diet that is not healthy for many years is going to make the liver work so hard that it's going to become very toxic. Or we can have the fatty liver.

So liver 14. Fantastic.

o start with. number two is REN 12, because it's the front-mu point of the stomach. It's really beneficial for acid reflux, indigestion, nausea, vomiting, of course, and stomach pain in the area because it's located where the stomach is. It's also the influential point of the Fu organ.

So the Fu organ are in charge of digestion. So this is a really key point to help when there's digestive system issue specifically of the upper digestive track. Now, if you combine REN 12, REN 6 and stomach 25. This is a really good combination when our stomach issues that also affect the large intestine, so upper and lower digestive track. This is a great combo. Number three is pericardium six, of course. It is such a great point for heartburn and acid reflux, nausea, vomiting, and morning sickness in pregnancy.

It's also used for seasickness, right? No matter what this point is. Fantastic specifically. If the patient has a lot of anxiety, which leads to nausea. I had a patient that came to see me years ago and was waking up every morning with nausea and sometimes vomiting. Every single morning. Once we did the full consultation, I realized her anxiety was really high.

And when she went to bed, she had a hard time falling asleep because she was so anxious. And when she woke up, she woke up really anxious and then she was nauseated and sometimes vomiting. So instead of treating just the nusea and vomiting, which she came for. I treated the anxiety. So pericardium six of course was part of the treatment protocol, but her. Diagnosis was heart and spleen blood deficiency, with some liver qi stagnation, which created the stomach qi rebelling or the nausea. And so pericardium six was a great point

for that. Number four is REN 17, because it is where the esophagus is located.

So it's a really good point for heartburn acid reflux. GERD. And again, just like the patients I mentioned before, if there is anxiety creating all this stomach qi rebelling, this is a fantastic point. So bear pericardium six and REN 17 would be a great combination for that person as well. And number five is stomach 34. Stomach 34 is the Xi-Cleft point of the stomach Meridian.

And Xi-Cleft points that are yang Meridian related, like the stomach. Always address pain while the xi-cleft point of the ying meridian always address bleeding, okay? So stomach 34 is really good for acute stomach pain. If there's a lot of cramping and spasm in the stomach, you can do stomach 34 patients can acupressure it.

You can needle it. And, if they don't want to be touched on REN 12, because it's too sensitive. This is a great distal point. To help with the pain. Now you could add up LI four because large intestine four is the best point when there's any pain, anywhere in the body as well. Right. You can combine those points.

So the five key acupuncture points for upper digestive tracks are Liver 14, REN 12, pericardium six Ren 17 and stomach 34.

Now let's look at. The lower digestive tract. The five key point for any symptoms affecting the lower digestive track are stomach 25 because it is the front mu point of the large intestine. So of course we can use it for diarrhea, constipation, IBS, anything that's happening into the large intestine. Stomach 25 has to be used.

The second one is large intestine four, because this is one of the best point for pain. But also it's the Yuan source point of the large intestine. So long standing, large intestine colon issue would benefit from large intestine 4. Now. Of course, we know that we cannot do large intestine for during pregnancy.

So we have to adapt. What do we do? Number three stomach 37. Stomach 37 is the lower He-sea point of the large intestine. And it's really good when

there's excess in the bowel or excess pattern effecting the large intestine. So if I have a pregnant woman that has constipation, for example, I cannot do stomach 25.

Cause it's on the belly. I cannot do LI 4 cause it's contraindicated. So I usually use stomach 36 for digestive issue, like my basic treatment. Right. I can do spleen six, so I would not do this or liver 13. Cause it's on the belly. So I would do stomach 36. And stomach 37. That would really, really help in starting to move the bowel.

And then I can add up more point like gallbladder 34 to move qi and liver three, to move qi, to allow this constipation to be addressed with a bit more and movements that make sense. So number one, stomach 25. Number two, large intestine four. Number three, stomach 37. Number four, spleen three, because spleen three is the yuan source point of this spleen. And it is in charge as a function of transforming and transporting the nutrients. Which is the main function of the spleen.

If the patient has malabsorption issue or food sensitivities issue, we wanted you spleen three. And number five, you know, it was coming. If you've listened to me before or watch any of my videos. It's stomach 40, my favorite point of all acupuncture point. Stomach 40 is the LUO connecting point connecting the stomach to the spleen.

So if there is issue of the digestive system specifically, if there is a lot of indigestion phlegm and a lot of nausea, that really is affecting both the spin and stomach, stomach 40th. Great. On top of it, stomach 40 is great to help balance blood sugar. I use this during pregnancy to try to balance blood sugar. So we do not get gestational diabetes for pregnant women. Stomach 40 is one of the best point for phlegm. And metabolic issues.

So we have to use this. If there is diabetes type two, for example, that type one, but type two. Stomach 40 totally rocks.

Okay. The best combo when it comes to lower digestive track issue. Is the digestive diamond, which is REN nine. Ren six. And stomach 25, These points are perfect when we are not sure of our diagnosis, but we want to address the digestive system issue.

Of course, we cannot do this during pregnancy, . But for everybody else, this is fantastic. One of my favorite thing to do.

Now At the beginning, I started this podcast by talking about how my dad died when I was five years old. I know what you're thinking. Ah, poor Clara. This is so sad. But I never felt sad. I barely remembered my dad because I was so young and my mom was the best mother ever.

My mom's Suzanne. I loved my mom. She lived to 92. She was the best mother, even though she was on minimum wage working 12 hour days. She loved us so much. Single mother had three kids. And we didn't have any money, but we laughed a lot because my mom was very funny. So being a single mother, obviously for her, it was not easy. But she taught me great values, great lesson.

And I think she did an amazing job raising me. Why am I sharing this story with you today is because since I was a little kid, I had chronic constipation. I tried everything to alleviate it. My diet was really high in fiber. I drank tons of water.

I always exercise. I worked in the fitness industry. I had a lot of really healthy food. So it should have been easy to have bowel movement daily, but Nope, not even close. I did massage. I did herbal supplement. They would help, but it was temporary. And as soon as I stop, the constipation would come back.

So now you probably thinking, okay, so your dad died and you had constipation all your life. What's the relationship here. Where am I going with? This will stick with me because I promise there was a very good point to this story. When I went back to school to learn TCM, I went to the student's clinic and I had acupuncture weekly. It would help, but as soon as I stop it would come back. In my last year of school, my husband's parents came to visit us in Vancouver because they live in the east of Canada.

And one evening after my husband, Craig told them about his latest work accomplishments. His father affectionately slapped his back and said, I'm so proud of you. My son. That phrase. Hit me like a bullet in the center of my chest. My breathing stopped.

Butterfly danced in my stomach, and I started tearing up. I quickly excuse myself. And I left the room. I realized the voice in my head said to me, No father will ever say that to you. That sentence, that my father-in-law said, I'm so proud of you. My son, I realized I would never hear that from a father. I had no idea that I carried this for many years. I was about 35 years old. And this, the first time I went to see a counselor to help me make sense of this until that point, I had never thought growing up that not having a dad was an issue because I love my mom. Well, apparently I had repressed emotions. Duh! We know that in TCM, it's very common, right? I was angry at my father for leaving my mom. To fend for herself to raise kids on her own, even though. It wasn't his fault. He got killed by a drunk driver while walking home after work. I felt guilty too for being angry at him.

And I felt sad because I don't think I've ever grieved him. Cause I was so young. Right. My counselor guided me to work through all those feelings. And wouldn't, you know, I've never had constipation.. Now, of course, when I travel and there's jet lag for a couple of days, it's a little bit backed up and then we get back into the regular rhythm.

That's normal, but that's just acute. But I've never had chronic constipation ever right after this.

In Chinese medicine, we always look for the root cause and according to my TCM teachers, 70% of all health issues that are chronic. are due to longstanding emotions. Well, that was me for sure. Over the years in my practice, I've seen how emotions affects us all physically.

And if you haven't listened to my podcast on emotional trauma, specifically sexual trauma. I will put the link in the show notes below, because it was one of the most popular show. And I understand why, because it's very gut wrenching. But very useful to understand our patients and what they went through. In the past trauma, and how we can help them. In the physical body.

We have to remember that the large intestine is the organ that let's go. Once I let go of my feelings regarding my dad. My bowel was happy again.

If the cause of chronic longstanding constipation is not constitutional. And it's not due to diet or no exercise. Then we have to look for the repressed emotion because often that is the culprit. By the way I have a colorful PDF with all the TCM pattern for constipation, with all the acupuncture point and treatment protocol and diet.

For those specific pattern,. It's completely free. I'll have the link for you in the show notes as well.

Now let's talk about the basic points for constipation. First of all, large intestine 4, of course. Unless it's due to deficiency and we might not want to put it. REN 9, REN 6 at stomach 25. That digestive diamond has to be there. Stomach 36 of course has to be there because it's the digestive system.

Right. But the best point for constipation is San jiao 6 you can also do stomach 37. If it's excess. If it's deficiency like yin deficiency, constipation, or blood deficiency, constipation, then kidney six. Is a better point while stomach 37 is a better point. when there is excess like liverqi stagnation, excess heat, excess dad, blastocyst, et cetera.

Makes sense. Those are the best point when it comes to moving the bowel.

Now let's look at the opposite. Diarrhea. There are many disorders that have diarrhea as their main symptoms.

I have a blog post on ulcerative colitis. I will put that in the show notes as well. If you've never read that post. And I talk about what are the best food for this specifically and how to address colitis according to TCM.

Nobody likes to talk about us, but most of us have had some acute diarrhea today. I want to talk about chronic diarrhea because it can be a nightmare for those patients who experienced it many, many times every day. Back when I was in TCM school, I barely could contain myself on the first day of clinic observation.

I was so excited. Finally, I was going to see my teachers in action, right. Using TCM to help those people. Our first patient's chief complaint was chronic diarrhea. As a clinic supervisor went through the consultation. I felt so sad for this poor woman. She had been dealing with this issue for over eight years, she had quit a job as a teacher because the emergency diarrhea attacks happened daily at random times.

So she couldn't work anymore. On the way to the clinic her husband mapped out all the public bathrooms they could use just in case she needed to go. She had done all the tests, bacteria, viruses, parasites, colonoscopy, endoscopy, blood tests, et cetera, stool samples. But the doctors could not figure out what caused it. They gave her medication to manage it. Our teacher, our brilliant TCM teacher. Diagnosed her with spleen qi deficiency, leading to yang deficiency. And she created a treatment plan that included acupuncture twice a week, a custom herbal formula and a very bland diet made of sweet potato yams, salmon, squash, cooked, eggs, stews, and bone broth. Within two weeks, she started having soft stools four times a day.

No emergency. Then one month into the treatment. She had two bowel movements per day and listen to this. They were formed stools. Wow. I was so impressed by my teacher. She was a genius to me. So over the next four years, I truly study under her. She was my gynecology teacher as well. And this is why probably I'm really passionate about women's health. My goal with her was to absorb the knowledge.

So one day I could really replicate what she does the best of my ability. Because I saw how she changed patient's life. She totally rocked. And so I wanted to be able to do that as well. Over the years of my practice.

I've seen many people who have chronic diarrhea as their common symptoms. So in general, when it comes to diarrhea again, if it's chronic, we can have many patterns, right? It could be due to liver qi stagnation, overacting, over controlling spleen creating spleen qi deficiency. It could be spleen qi deficiency by itself, or with dampness.

It could be spleen or kidney yang deficiency. No matter what you could still do the digestive diamond stomach 25 ren 9, ren 6 six as your basics, right? Now because diarrhea is watery. That means dampness or excess body fluid.

We have to do spleen nine. That's one of the best point. Gallbladder 34 is also a great point to dry the dampness. So we have to incorporate those too. does that make sense? And then you can treat the pattern

As we wrap up this episode, remember that the digestive system is at the core of our being. By integrating acupuncture with diet and lifestyle recommendation. We can empower our patients to achieve better health outcome.

We really, truly want to make a diagnosis and look for the root cause. However, I truly hope that you can utilize those top 15 acupuncture points in your practice. To change the lives of your patients.

Don't ever forget. You are a TCM rockstar. You rock every day, and I'm so glad. You took the time to listen to the podcast today.

Thank you so much for spending your time with me today. I truly hope you benefited from this episode and I would love for you to share it with a friend that may benefit from it as well. Follow the show, leave a review and if you want more go to my website acuproacademy.com. I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case study, free courses and so much more.

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