

In North America, over 2.5 million visits to the doctor a year is for constipation. As TCM practitioners, we are definitely here to help.

Constipation is one of the most common complaint in clinical practice. Now, not everybody comes in for constipation specifically, but when we do a consultation and we ask about the bowels, a lot of our patients, let's face it, have some issue with constipation.

It shows up in all ages, all patterns. And if we don't get the diagnosis right, no amount of acupuncture can budge and move the stools down the bowel and out the door.

This is why today I am talking all about constipation. We're gonna look at the most common patterns and their symptoms, their acupuncture points, formulas. We'll talk about lifestyle advice, diet, and supplement to really help ease constipation. We're gonna look at the causes as well, because often chronic constipation has an underlying stress or emotional stress that's attached to it, because as a reminder, the large intestine is the organ that lets go.

No more guesswork. Just solid, clear tools that you can use in clinic tomorrow. Let's go.

Welcome to AcuPro, A show dedicated to making Chinese medicine and acupuncture. Easy to grasp and fun to learn. Hi, I am your host, Clara Cohen. I support practitioners and students and 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.

Every time I go back to France to visit my family from Canada. This is a 10 hour plane ride from Vancouver all the way to somewhere in Europe being Frankfurt, London, Paris, and then I have another plane to go to Geneva because I'm from the French Alps originally.

So this is a long time sitting down doing nothing plus the cabin pressure. Really creates constipation. So when I travel, my bowels don't move that well. This is why we could see that one of the cause of constipation is sedentary lifestyle. Now that's for chronic constipation. Acute constipation can happen again.

Like I said, when we travel or things are change, or we're sick, we're laying down or we're not eating, depending on what's going on. So today we're really gonna focus on chronic constipation.

The definition of constipation is difficulty in passing stools and or prolonged intervals between bowel movements.

I have a patient that came years ago and she would have a bowel movement maybe two to three times a month. Yeah, sometimes not for two weeks.

That blew my mind because it is so key to health to eliminate otherwise what stays inside, festers inside and can actually lead to. Toxicity, right? So it's really important that we move the bowel. Also, with old people, if there is no bowel movement, the blood pressure can rise. So it's really key for them to have a daily bowel movement. I remember my mom used to take track of her bowel movement daily. She had a calendar, and then she would put, yes, great. Not today. . Like she would put all every day the comments.

And my husband saw that one time and he said, what does that mean? What is that? Great, not great. Not today. What is that? And then she told him, she's like, I'm keeping track of my bowel movement, because if I don't go for two days, I get freaked out. So I have prune juice, apples, things to help me go. So my husband's like, whoa, that's a lot of information.

But that's the point. With older people, it's even more essential. It's essential for all of us, but with older people, it can become really a trigger to blood pressure and other issues

according to TCM, the causes of chronic constipation can be due to stress, emotions, or longstanding emotion, emotional trauma, diet, drugs, illnesses, and of course lack of movement or lack of exercise.

Constipation is often a symptoms of the following Western disorders, hypothyroidism, depression, anxiety. IBS, diverticulitis and other issues.

Let's start to look at the TCM causes. Emotions can absolutely stagnate. Of course, the liver is in charge of moving qi, so when we're stressed, we're tense, we're tight. Or if we're not moving, liver qi is not moving, and so stagnation can occur in the bowel, which creates constipation.

Emotions like anger can create some heat and some stagnation, and constipation, when people are very sad and grieve and cry a lot, they spend a lot

of energy with their lungs and the lung is not connecting to the large intestine at that time, and so there is no bowel movement, so that also can create constipation. Of course, like we said, chronic illness drugs or medication can do that as well.

Diet, if we lack fiber. Hydration and lubrication, right? So we're gonna talk about diet in a minute. Those are the main causes according to TCM.

. I've talked in the past about my story about chronic constipation my entire life until one thing happened and triggered me to realize something that was stuck in me emotionally for many, many decades, and I was able to release it.

If you haven't heard that story yet, I'll have the link for you in the show notes.

Before we start looking at the most common patterns for constipation, let's see what we can do When it comes to ear point, because I love the ears.

My favorite microsystem, the three points I would do for chronic constipation would be liver. 'cause it moves everything. Large intestine, of course, because it's affecting the colon and shen men to relax the whole body. Now, if it was due to stress specifically, I would also add sympathetic. So we can play around, we could put two points on one side and two on the other.

We could put seeds so the patient can go and stimulate. So this would be fantastic. Now, the second thing I wanted to say before we start to look at each pattern is sometimes making a diagnosis is not easy. We all know TCM diagnosis is the hardest part of TCM. Yep. So what do we do if we're not really sure?

So let's talk about what are the main points to do no matter what.

I think that even if we don't have a full understanding of the diagnosis, we can figure out if the person is more deficient or more excess in general. Yes, you are with me on that one. So. If there is constipation, no matter if it's excess or deficiency, we wanna do the digestive diamond. The digestive diamond, I've talked about it many times is ren 6, ren 9 nine, and stomach 25.

And you wanna needle it in the way the colon is flowing, which means from your right or the patient's right up. And down to the left, down to the rectum, right? So we start at stomach 25 on the right of the patient, ren nine, stomach 25 on the left of the patient, and ren six. So this is how we would needle.

We can also massage it in that direction as well to help the patient and we can show the patient how to massage it slowly in a circle for them to do this at home as well. So this, no matter what the diagnosis is, one of the best thing to do, however.

What about if the patient is a pregnant lady? We can't needle her belly, right? So we can't do that at all. So let's look at what do we do if it is due to excess or deficiency, we have to do stomach 36 pregnant or no pregnant stomach 36 is the commander point. Of the digestive system, so no matter what it's gonna be there.

Now if it's due to excess stomach 37 is the lower he-sea point of the large intestine. So you would have to put this because it helps clear excess in the large intestine. Large intestine four is the un source point of the large intestine, and it helps move qi and blood accompanied with liver three. So I would do the four gates if it was due to excess to

try to move liver qi and blood with the four gates. Okay, so now we got those points. Were pretty good.

**Ad:** If you still struggle to come up with the right treatment protocol for your patients, you are going to love my third book by Popular Demand. I have created a guide for TCM treatments for over 160 common syndromes with acupuncture points, herbal formula, ear points, diet, and so much more, including many, many of my clinical pearls.

It is the. 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. If you are like me and you'd rather have a hard copy version, the publisher ships it all over the world. But before you invest in my Chinese medicine, treatments made easy, I wanna make sure it's everything you were looking for so you can download a sample of it.

Listen to what people who invest in this book had to say, thank you, Clara. This is exactly what I needed. I love how you organized this book. It's truly helping me in my first year in practice. Yay. So excited. Bought it immediately. It will be a great resource for studying for boards. That's awesome. Oh my God.

I immediately purchased this, and it is such a bargain price that I almost feel ashamed for paying what I believe is worth of much, much more. Even as an experienced practitioner for over 10 years, I like your stuff just as much in

benefit from it. Yay. All this is just so rewarding for me, so I hope you get your copy.

If you don't have one, the link is in the show notes below, or you can go to my website [acuproacademy.com](http://acuproacademy.com) and click the shop tab on the menu bar. You won't regret it. I put so much heart and soul in it. I hope you enjoy it and benefit from it, and in turn, your patients do as well.

Now if someone is pregnant, you can do stomach 37, stomach 36, but you cannot do large intestine four. I usually do liver 3 and gallbladder 34 to relax the qi, to move the best point Also for constipation. Is San Jiao 6. So San Jiao 6 Also relaxed. The bowel specifically for excess doesn't work as well.

For deficiency, I would have to say if it's a deficiency, kidney six is great, and spleen six is great as well. So if it's a deficiency, I would do stomach 36 and then I would do spleen six. Kidney six. Now spleen six you cannot do during pregnancy, so we're gonna omit that one. And usually during pregnancy, the constipation is due to excess.

So it's a much easier thing to do. Yes. Okay. Those are your basic points. Now let's look at each specific common patterns when it comes to chronic constipation.

the most common one is liver qi stagnation. And the person has a feeling of incompleteness after a bowel movement. So they constipate they go and they feel like they weren't finished.

And it is worse when stress and worse at the week before, prior to menstruation or at pm s time. Lots of gas. Lots of bloating that feels better after bowel movement, but gets worse as the day progresses. The person is of course irritable, maybe rib pain. PMS symptoms. If it was a woman sighing tense stress, the pulse is worried super easy.

Now for points again. Like I said, you could do your basic points like your digestive diamond. You can add up san jiao 6, san jiao 5. You can do stomach 37, gallbladder 34, liver three, large intestine four. Those are all great point. Now you could add up liver 14 because it's the front mu point of the liver.

You could do the back-shu point like bladder 18, but it's not very convenient because we have more points in the front. So doing the front move would be more. Useful. The next one is phlegm. Phlegm is really interesting because

often we don't know the difference between phlegm and dampness. They have a lot of similarities.

Same tongue with a greasy coat, same pulse, which is slippery. They both have probably a foggy head, heavy limbs, poor concentration, poor focus, maybe greasy scalp, greasy skin fatigue. All those things are very similar to phlegm and damp. However, when there's dampness, there is loose stools or diarrhea with phlegm.

There's chronic constipation, which when we have a bowel movement, it's sticky. It's formed, but sticky meaning we need a lot of toilet paper in order to clean, right? So that's the phlegm. Also, the mind feels more clear and focused after the bowel movement. Now again, we can do the digestive diamond. We can do stomach 37, stomach 36, but the best point for phlegm is stomach 40.

That's what we wanna do. Gallbladder 34 is a great point to move. Also, it moves dampness and phlegm as well. We can do liver three to help move the phlegm when there's phlegm. The stagnation pericardium six is great for phlegm as well, so you can play around. This is just a guide to kind of help you understand how.

We differentiate all the patterns, and then you can pick up your points. The next one would be food stagnation. Now food stagnation often is acute, like after a big Christmas dinner and you feel so bloated. But for some people it is a chronic thing because they overeat every single day.

So now there's constipation, alternating with smelly diarrhea. There's nausea, specifically after eating a big meal. Gas belching, burping, acid reflux. The tongue has a greasy coat 'cause food stagnation leads to phlegm and a slippery pulse. So again, you could do your digestive diamond, you could do stomach 37 again because it is excess food.

Stagnation is an excess pattern. Remember, stomach three seven is the lower he-sea point of large intestine, which means it's used for excess. We can do san jiao 5 or san jiao six because they both help when it comes to constipation. And of course I would do re 12 because there's lots of nausea.

Maybe pericardium six. They help with the nausea and the belching and the acid reflux. The next two are basically very similar. It's large intestine heat or heat in the large intestine. Or we can also talk about Yang Ming syndrome. Now, Yang Ming syndrome is more acute with sweating, very thirsty fever, constipation, and very dark urine. . So this is going to be more acute, so we're gonna have to

really clear the heat. We have large intestine 11, stomach 44. We can do the digestive diamond, of course.

Stomach 37. Again, San jiao 5, San jiao six, all those can be put in there. With large intestine heat, it is more of a chronic issue. We have chronic constipation with hard dry stools, a red face. Bad breath due to the heat. Scanty, dark urine thirst were like big thirst for cold drinks.

Irritability, A red tongue with a yellow coat and a slippery rapid pulse. Now again, you could do the digestive diamond, but now we need to clear all that excess heat, right? So stomach 44, large intestine 11. One of the best point because. It's its own meridian. Obviously we can do stomach 37. I would put large intestine four because it helps clear heat as well, right?

So there's a lot you can do. If you have my book, Chinese Medicine Treatment Made Easy.

You can see the patterns with constipation, with the herbal formula and the points. Remember the points. So just guiding point, adapt them to each of your patients issue. Does that make sense? Okay. Now let's look at deficiency formula. The first one very common is blood deficiency. I see a lot of women with this.

It's constipation with dry pebbles, stools, dry skin, dry hair, pale nails, pale face, pale lips, poor memory, fatigue or poor energy, insomnia. This is the insomnia where you cannot fall asleep, maybe anxiety, maybe dizziness as well. Definitely a pale tongue and a thin choppy pulse. So remember, blood deficiency is always pale and poor.

Poor sleep, poor energy, poor memory, and numb limbs or tingling and pins and needles, so poor circuit. Make sense. With that, we wanna nourish blood. We are going to do stomach 36, we are going to do spleen six, and then we can do the digestive diamond as well. would also probably add up liver eight and probably heart seven to calm the mind. The next deficiency pattern is a qi deficiency, and this is going to be related to the lung, so it's kind of a lung qi deficiency. We're gonna have shorter breath sweating during the day. Weak voice, pale face constipation with difficulty in passing stools and fatigue after the bowel movement because it takes a lot of QI to strain and to push the bowel movement or the stool out.

The tongue is gonna be pale maybe with teeth marks because it's probably affecting the spleen as well. And we're gonna have a weak pulse probably in the

lung and spleen and heart area. This could happen to a lot of people that have asthma or a chronic lung issue like COPD.

Now again, we can do stomach 25. We can do spleen six, stomach 36, ren six. right? Tonify qi. That's what we wanna do and we can do the digestive diamond

Y in deficiency is the next common pattern. This one happens a lot doing menopause in women that have constipation with dry small sheep like stools. So very similar to the blood deficiency, however. The yin deficiency will have five center heat, hot palms, hot soles, and hot chest area, night sweats, insomnia.

Now this insomnia is tossed and turned all night and waking up because the person's feeling hot. They will have red cheeks, maybe dizziness, red lips, dry mouth, specifically at night. Tongue would be red and cracked with a very scanty or no coat. And the pulse is thin, rapid.

Now again, we can do the digestive diamond every single time. We want a nourish yin., so kidney six is a great point for that. And then we can do stomach 36, spleen six as well. Now we could also add a back shu point or front mu point of the liver and the kidney because this is definitely more of a kidney and liver yin deficiency.

So bladder 18 and bladder 23.

**Ad:** Before we continue with today's episode, I wanna share something that honestly feels like a big moment for me if you've been following me for a while. You know, I've always said no to all sponsorships. I've been approached many times, but I turn them all down because if I don't genuinely use a product or love it, I will never recommend it to you.

But today is different. I am super excited to introduce my very first sponsor. Drum roll please. Jane app. I'm also a Jane Ambassador, so this is a company I actually use and love. I am saying yes because I've used Jane for years in my own multidisciplinary clinic. Truly, it's the best practice management software and electronic medical record.

I've ever worked with before, Jane, we were using a clunky system that made everything harder than it needed to be. When we switched the entire clinic, felt the difference immediately. Jane is built by people who actually understand what it's like to be a practitioner. Running a busy practice. One of my favorite features is online booking.

There is nothing better than waking up and seeing patients booking their own appointment. Well, I was asleep. Your patients can book when it works for them and the wait list feature. Fills last minute cancellations automatically. I love that. I used to spend so much time calling eight to 10 people just to fill up one spot.

Jane also automates the things we never enjoy doing, like intake forms, reminders, confirmation. It honestly feels like having an extra assistant handling all the moving parts. You can focus on what really matters, which is supporting your patients and being the TCM rockstar practitioner. You truly are.

There are so many features I could talk about, but we would be here all day if you are looking for a system that brings more ease, more clarity and comment to your practice. I truly. Recommend Jane. You can check it out at [jane.app/demo](http://jane.app/demo). And because you're part of the Acupro community, you can use my code `acupro one mo one month` when you sign up to get a one month grace period on your new account.

The link and the code are also in the show notes below for you. Now let's get back to today's episode.

And the last one, which is going to be a bit surprising but happens a lot with old people is yang deficiency with internal cold. So how is yang Deficiency gonna create constipation? Right? Because we know from yang deficiency specifically, let's say kidney yang deficiency, the main symptoms is 5:00 AM diarrhea or early morning diarrhea.

So this is a constipation, meaning that the person does not have a bowel movement every day. But when they have it, it's very difficult in passing the stools, they have to strain and push, but the bowel movement is loose. It is not formed because there is yang deficiency and because there's no fire, no energy, no yang, the person is gonna feel exhausted.

After the bowel movement, they'll have cold body, specifically cold feet because this is a kidney yang deficiency, maybe edema on the ankles, abdominal pain that feels better with warmth, low back pain that feels better with warmth and a pale, swollen tongue with a wet coat. That's a typical yang deficiency and a deep slow pulse.

Now this yang deficiency creates the internal cold. It's not the internal cold that created the yang deficiency. I hope that makes sense. Again, you can do the

digestive diamond, but you also can do moxa on ren four, on stomach 36 on spleen six, and then you can do front mu or back shu point of kidney and spleen.

That would be really, really good, and large intestine of course. So if you did back shu be bladder 20, 23 and 25, which are the spleen, kidney en large intestine. And if you wanted to do. Front mu, you could do liver 13, which is the front mu point of the spleen. Of course, stomach 25, it's part of the digestive diamond, which is the large intestine, front mu point, and gallbladder 25 is the front mu point of the kidney.

So here you go. That's a lot of points and that's a lot of things to think about , but I really wanted to give you the most common, those are not exclusive. Okay, so we've looked at the patterns, ear acupuncture and the causes.

Now let's talk about what the patient needs to do in order to help themselves, because we are here to guide them and we are here to help them, but they need to do the work as well. Right. Okay. I always say to patients, I'm gonna help you to get to the top of the mountain. This is where you wanna feel better.

This is where good health is. I'll guide you up there, but you gotta walk. I'm not carrying you. Which means they do have to do their homework. So the first thing is we need to look at what the cause is, if it's lack of exercise or lack of movement, because maybe they work at a desk all day. They need to get up and move, even if it's just to go for a walk for five minutes outside or get up and walk around the office, come back or have a standing desk or something that gets them to move and when they have their lunch hour, maybe make sure you go for fresh air and movement.

That is key. The second one is stress creates a lot of constipation, so we need to find ways to relieve the stress, and for everyone it's different. For some people, it's singing, dancing, going hiking. For me, it's being outside, hiking with my husband and my dog, going for bike ride, going kayaking. That makes me happy and takes the stress away.

So whatever helps the patient, we need to educate them. One of the big lifestyle change that I recommend to patient is I. Whew, deep breathing exercises. So many of my patients are shallow believer because they're so anxious all the time.

We need to learn to take big, deep breath a few times a day. Big deep breath, three to four times in a row. Relax and go on about your day, but keep trying to do this to really mitigate the stress.

When it comes to nutrition and diet, it is key to have a normal bowel movement. So depending on the pattern, if it's a yin deficiency or a blood deficiency or anything that's more dry, we are gonna recommend a lot more lubrication. And hydration. What does that mean? Hydration means drinking and eating food that are high in water content, so high in electrolytes like cucumber, watermelon, bone broth, soups, teas, anything that's going to bring a lot of nourishment to the body with a lot of minerals. Second one is lubrication.

Not only we need to bring high water content to the body. We also need to lubricate it, which means we need food high in essential fatty acids like nuts, seeds, avocado, olive oil, flax oil, anything that is really good for the body and high in good fats. That has to be incorporated

because a lot of women in menopause will come and say to me, I drink tons of water and I'm still constipated. That's because you're not lubricating, right? Because in menopause, a lot of the body starts to dry. So we need lubrication, vitamin E, vitamin D, and food that is really high in fatty acids. So that's what we need to explain to patients, give them the guidance.

Last but not least, let's look at supplements. Obviously if there's chronic constipation, it would be really great to test and check out what's going on with the bowel. The patients can go and get lots of testing. However, in the meantime, supplements can be useful.

For example, magnesium. Magnesium is great in relaxing the body, but also the stools and softening the stool naturally.

There's a lot of different kind of magnesium glycinate, citrate malate. We wanna recommend the citrate magnesium that's the best when it comes to constipation because glycinate, for example, is great for stress and relaxing and going to sleep better.

So it's really key to understanding. Vitamins and nutrients in order to educate our patients, because let's face it, they're probably gonna Google and they're not gonna know what the answer is. It's better if it comes from you. If you haven't checked out yet, Dr. Alex's vitamins and nutrients course. I love that course. I learned so much from it. It is on our website at Acupro Academy. I'll have the link for you in the show notes. Check it out because it is so essential as TCM practitioners 'cause we did not learn that in school to be able to guide our patients with the knowledge of understanding vitamins and minerals.

Wow. That was a lot of information. As I said when we started, constipation is very common among our patients and we can help. TCM is so amazing. I've had patients come in, they're like, after acupuncture, I have the best bowel movement. Woo-hoo.

Acupuncture rocks. As always.

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, live a review, and if you want more, go to my website, [acuproacademy.com](http://acuproacademy.com). I have tons of resources there with treatment protocols, case studies, free courses, and so much more.

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