

Acupuncture and High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, or hypertension, affects more than one in three Americans, but most people may not even know they have it. Since hypertension can lead to heart attacks and other life-threatening health problems, it's very important to learn all you can and take action to lower your risk. Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) offer a safe, natural and pain-free way to keep your blood pressure in check.

What is hypertension? Blood pressure is the actual force of blood flowing against your artery walls. Getting your blood pressure tested is a quick, simple process. It's measured in two numbers: systolic pressure and diastolic pressure. Blood pressure is considered high if your systolic pressure is at or above 140 mm Hg, and/or your diastolic pressure is at or above 90 mm Hg.



Often called "the silent killer," hypertension doesn't usually cause symptoms until it gets severe enough to lead to major health problems such as heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and metabolic disorders. It has also been linked to dementia and cognitive impairment.

What causes hypertension? More than 90% of cases of hypertension are known as "essential hypertension" and have no identifiable cause. "Secondary hypertension," on the other hand, is caused by underlying conditions such as kidney disease or certain medications.

The risk factors for essential hypertension include age (the risk is higher after age 35), ethnicity (African Americans are at higher risk), and a family history of the condition. While you can't control those factors, there are many you can control, including:

- Being overweight
- Stress
- Excessive salt intake
- Drinking heavily
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Tobacco use

How can acupuncture and TCM help? Fortunately, there are many ways to lower your blood pressure. Typical Western treatments include controlling your risk factors and taking medication if needed. By incorporating acupuncture and TCM into your treatment plan you can treat your hypertension and improve your overall health and well-being.

Western Medicine has a different approach for the treatment of hypertension and relates it to a disease of the cardiovascular system. Acupuncture and TCM practitioners take a holistic, or whole body approach for the treatment of hypertension and take into account imbalanced conditions of the whole system that can involve the function of the liver, kidneys, digestive system and heart. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, Qi (chee) is the life force that animates the body and protects it from illness. It flows through pathways called meridians to nourish all of the body's organs. When there is an imbalance or blockage in the flow of Qi disease and illness result.

The goal of treatment is to find and address the underlying imbalances affecting the flow of Qi, leading to the elevated blood pressure and various symptoms. By addressing the root cause of your high blood pressure, TCM can help your body regain its natural balance. In doing so, you'll also be strengthening your health and reducing the risk of future health problems.

Acupuncture and TCM have proven effective against a wide variety of health concerns. Studies have found that a special form of acupuncture using electrical stimulation is particularly helpful in lowering blood pressure. By working together with your practitioner, you'll be on your way to successfully treating your hypertension and improving your health.