



DIY STEPS FOR SELF-CARE

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ACUPRESSURE



Karin Parramore
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Acupressure vs. Acupuncture



Acupressure is based on acupuncture, a treatment in which filiform (hair-like) needles are inserted into acupuncture points (acupoints) to stimulate a number of different responses. From a purely biomedical perspective, acupuncture is known to stimulate the immune response that occurs at anytime we insert something foreign into the body. There may be changes in the tissues at the site of the insertion, among other things. Hormonal changes can take place, for example, leading to a sense of calm and relaxation. From a Chinese Medicine perspective, the needle is a conduit for the qi (energy, or life force) in the universe to interact with the qi of both the practitioner and the patient. As described in the chapter on Chinese Medicine (see Chapter 1), the patterns of nature guide the patterns within our bodies, and sometimes we need to reconnect with those universal blueprints to maintain a sense of well-being.

As an acupuncturist, I can sense changes in the patterns and I work with patients to help smooth the flow of qi. Most times, I am working to remove blockages and encourage qi to return to those places in the body where it is deficient, in order to restore order to the system; in other words, such treatments help the body remember the pattern of health by removing the blocks to health. In most cases, it takes many years to attain both proficiency at needling and a license to practice acupuncture. For practitioners attempting to work with the root pattern, it makes sense that we would need a great deal of training. The ability to address the symptoms, however, is something everyone should be able to achieve. Reducing discomfort or improving digestion, for example, can greatly improve the quality of life as we work through the process of returning the body to a place of balance.

As mentioned, simply pressing on the acupoint with the intention of smoothing the imbalances can be remarkably effective.

BEFORE TREATMENT

For the best results, it is important to make time and space for the treatment — try to perform the acupressure when you can focus, in a place where you will not be disturbed or distracted, especially when first learning the technique.

Before you begin applying the treatment, get a sense of where the points are located on the body. You can learn to do this through sensing tissue changes. This is much easier to experience than most people think. Start by gently palpating — touching mostly with the fingertips — along the lines of the channels to see if you can feel the energy pathway. With practice, you will gain a sense of the course it runs. Next, use the detailed, step-by-step instructions listed throughout this chapter to precisely locate the acupressure points.

LOCATING THE ACUPRESSURE POINTS

Fortunately, many of the acupressure points (acupoints) exist over naturally occurring dips and depressions on the body, and the finger will fall into these quite naturally when palpating.

APPLYING PRESSURE

Once the point has been confidently located, it is time to apply the pressure. It is not necessary to apply very much pressure. In fact, firm and steady is more important than really deep pressure. The tissue should not be pressed to the point of frank pain, although it may well be sensitive or uncomfortable (this is often a sign you are on the right track!). If there is an indentation of the tissue that remains for more than 10 seconds after removing your finger, reduce the pressure a bit at the next point. There should *never* be bruising.

On the other hand, the pressure applied needs to be great enough to easily feel the sensation. Most importantly, pay attention to your body's feedback. Is there an increase in pain or discomfort when you press a point? It may be that the imbalance is resolving, or it may mean you need to lessen the pressure. The more you learn to listen to the feedback, the easier it will become to gauge what your body is telling you.

ACHIEVING BALANCE

Most of the acupoints are bilateral; that is, the points are matched on each side of the body. For most conditions, pressing both points is a good idea — remember, the body is an interdependent system and any influence your treatment exerts will affect the whole body. Balancing will likely happen faster if both sides are equally addressed. If possible, first find and then press both sides at the same time.

If the condition is one-sided, it may be easier to treat the points on the opposite side, especially if a suggested point is close to an area of pain or discomfort. This may seem odd, but because the two sides of the body are basically a mirror image, treating the opposite side will benefit the side with the pain or injury, for a fascinating reason that is beyond the scope of this book.

HOW OFTEN CAN I USE ACUPRESSURE?

The points can be pressed many times throughout the day, as desired. As long as the guidelines around pressure are followed, it is difficult, for the most part, to overtreat with acupressure. Again, listen to the feedback from your body. Be sure to also drink a large glass of water following an acupressure treatment.

ACCESSING ACUPRESSURE POINTS

It is often necessary to maintain tension in certain parts of the body to access the points on your own. For example, to treat foot points requires bending over, and to access the neck points may require holding the arms up for an extended period, which many people find uncomfortable. It is important to find the most comfortable position for accessing the points so they can be pressed for an adequate amount of time without leading to discomfort. You will find suggestions for positioning in each acupoint description to help achieve the greatest ease.

The points described here were chosen first for their function, but accessibility was also a key consideration. Self-treatment requires a person to be able to reach the point easily. It may be easier, however, to enlist the help of another individual to access some of the points. If someone is assisting, be sure to direct them precisely on where the point is located. Communicate clearly about your responses and give good verbal feedback so the helper does not press too hard, for example.

Allergies

Allergies are a hypersensitivity immune response to allergens, defined as substances generally accepted as non-threatening in people without allergies.

The immune system mistakes a non-threatening substance as a threat and mounts an exaggerated response. This usually occurs after a period of hypersensitization, where the allergy sufferer has been exposed to the substance over a long time or in large quantities.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Typical signs and symptoms include itching, sneezing, runny nose, tearing and congestion. Skin allergy signs include redness, rash or hives, itching and blisters.

NOTE

This section is designed to help the allergy sufferer reduce their symptoms and is not intended for people suffering from life-threatening reactions such as anaphylaxis.

Spleen 6 (Sanyinjiao)

This point is located on the lower leg.

- 1 To locate the point, sit in a chair and cross one ankle over the opposite knee to allow easy access to the lower leg. Locate the medial malleolus (inner ankle bone).



- 2 Next, place four fingers across the lower leg, with the outer edge of the fifth (pinkie) finger pressing against the ankle bone. Note this line.



- 3 Locate the medial posterior (inner back) edge of the tibia (shinbone).



- 4 Where these two location lines intersect is where you will find the point.

* **WARNING:** Avoid during pregnancy – can cause contractions.



OTHER ACUPRESSURE POINTS TO CONSIDER

After pressing the best acupressure point for this condition, follow with one of these points:

- For allergies with watering eyes, add **BL2 / Zanzhu** (see Bladder 2, page 50)
- For allergies with excessive watery mucus, add **LI20 / Yingxiang** (see Large Intestine 20, page 33)

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

A collection of symptoms resulting from pressure on the median nerve, the primary nerve serving the hand and fingers.

With this condition, the median nerve becomes trapped in the carpal tunnel, a small gap created by the transverse carpal ligament and the bones of the wrist. In addition to the nerve, the tendons responsible for moving the fingers pass through this small space. If inflammation of the tissues occurs as a result of overuse (repetitive movements like typing, for example), the nerve is caught between the swollen tissue and the bones, resulting in diminished function.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

In addition to diminished function, carpal tunnel syndrome usually results in tingling, numbness and fatigue of the hand. There is often associated pain — often sharp and stabbing — and there may be an electric sensation. Pain may radiate to other areas, commonly up the arm toward the elbow.

Proper ergonomics when performing repetitive tasks is crucial. Many computer keyboards are designed to keep the hands in a more natural position when typing, while pads can help support the wrists.

The condition may spontaneously reverse and normal function return with no treatment whatsoever; however, this is not usual. The conventional treatment is surgery, and braces may be helpful in some cases. Oral corticosteroids are also regularly prescribed.

NOTE

Carpal tunnel syndrome may be associated with other diseases such as hypothyroidism and diabetes, and pregnancy can exacerbate the condition.

Pericardium 7 (Daling)

This point is located on the medial (inner) forearm, on the wrist crease.

- 1 To locate the point, rest the hand on a comfortable surface, palm side facing up. Locate the wrist crease by slightly bending the hand up. Relax the hand.



- 2 Next, locate the tendon at the center of the wrist.



- 3 Tensing all fingers will engage the tendon, making it easier to find.



- 4 Where the wrist crease and the tendon intersect is where you will find the point.



OTHER ACUPRESSURE POINTS TO CONSIDER

After pressing the best acupressure point for this condition, follow with one of these points:

- For carpal tunnel syndrome with heat, add **LU11 / Shaoshang** (see Lung 11, page 28)
- For carpal tunnel syndrome with cold, use **Ht7 / Shenmen** (see Heart 7, page 46)

Common Cold

The common cold is viral infection resulting in a typical (common) set of symptoms.

The main culprits are respiratory syncytial virus, rotovirus, rhinovirus and coronavirus. These viruses can survive on surfaces outside of the body long enough to infect others. Most people catch a cold when they come in contact with the causative agent after someone sneezes or coughs. Doorknobs and light switches, for example, are surfaces we regularly touch without thinking.

Those most at risk include babies and children, the elderly and the immunocompromised. If the immune system is weakened or suppressed, a simple common cold can be a serious problem.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Stiff neck, fatigue, a feeling of general malaise, headache, sore throat, fever and chills, sneezing, coughing, runny nose and other symptoms can manifest with the common cold.

OTHER TREATMENT

- Garlic and onion soup, preferably made with a bone broth base

Lung 7 (LU7 / Lieque)

This point is located on the crest of the forearm, very close to the wrist.

- 1 To locate the point, rest the hand on a comfortable surface, palm side facing up. Locate the wrist crease by slightly bending the hand up. Relax the hand.



- 2 With your other hand, lay the three middle fingers horizontally along the crease, with the fourth (ring) finger positioned on the crease itself.



- 3 Next, roll the tip of the index finger up and over the radius bone, the bone on the thumb side of the forearm.



- 4 Where the tip of the finger lands on the radius bone is where you will find the point.



OTHER ACUPRESSURE POINTS TO CONSIDER

After pressing the best acupressure point for this condition, follow with one of these points:

- For cold with fever, add **LI4 / Hegu** (see Large Intestine 4, page xx)
- For cold with alternating chills and fever, add **GB43 / Xiaxi** (see Gallbladder 43, page xx)

Constipation

While constipation is commonly understood to be slow or difficult bowel movements, medically it is defined as fewer than one complete bowel movement a day.

Constipation has many causes. Dehydration and lack of fiber can lead to small, dry stools, a situation more easily addressed by changes in diet. Lack of tone in the bowel, medications, bowel surgery, restricted exercise, dietary sensitivities and age can all result in slower transit time.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

The two most common forms of constipation are a very slow transit time with normal stool or regular movements but with dry, small, pebbly stools. A feeling of incomplete evacuation may accompany a slower transit time. Constipation can lead to a need to strain — a tendency that usually leads to other problems, such as hemorrhoids or rectal bleeding. There is often pain, especially with dry stool.

If the symptoms continue for more than a week, it is probably a good idea to talk with your doctor.

OTHER TREATMENT

- Ensure adequate fiber, water and oil in the diet. If the constipation is due to lack of motility rather than dehydration, consider abdominal massage to help the muscles of digestion do their job

CAUTION: Be wary of over-the-counter laxatives — using them for extended periods can make the problem worse.

NOTE

If there is a complete lack of bowel movement, it may indicate a blockage in the bowel — contact a doctor as soon as possible.

Stomach 25 (ST25 / Tianshu)

This point is located on the abdomen, at the level of the umbilicus (belly button).

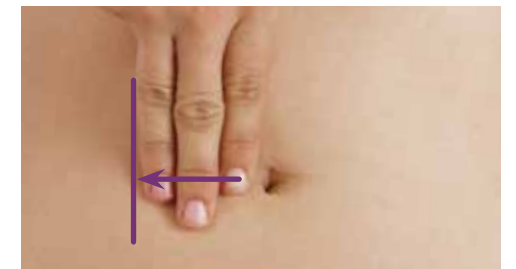
- 1 To locate the point, lie down and expose the lower abdomen. Locate the umbilicus. Place three fingers vertically (fingertips pointing down) against the lower abdomen, measured from the belly button, so that the edge of the index finger is against the outer edge of the belly button.



- 2 Where the third finger ends up on the abdomen, mark an imaginary vertical line. Slide the tip of the index finger along an imaginary horizontal line to the point where the two lines intersect. Where there is a slight depression you will find the point. Note the point.



- 3 Next, locate the point on the opposite side of the abdomen.



- 4 Using the index fingers, press both points at the same time.



* **WARNING:** Avoid during pregnancy — may cause too much pressure on the baby.

OTHER ACUPRESSURE POINTS TO CONSIDER

After pressing the best acupressure point for this condition, follow with one of these points:

- For constipation with feeling of incompleteness, add **ST36 / Zusanli** (see Stomach 36, page xx) followed by **K13 / Taixi** (see Kidney 3, page xx)

CHAPTER 3

Acupressure Points

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|--|-----|---|-----|
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| Bladder 67 (BL67 • Zhiyin)..... | 000 | | |
| Kidney 1 (KI1 • Yongquan)..... | 000 | | |

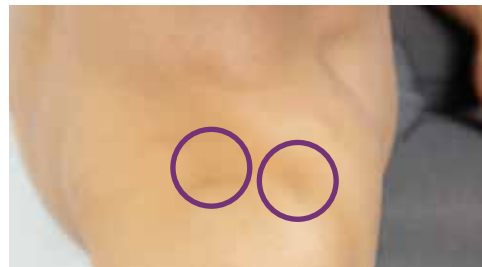
Triple Warmer 14 (Jianliao)

This point is located on the posterior (back) shoulder, at the shoulder joint.

- 1 To locate the point, stand in front of a mirror. Bend the arm 90 degrees and raise the elbow until it is level with the shoulder.



- 2 This will cause two depressions to appear next to each other at the top of the shoulder. If they are not obvious, palpate for them just above the deltoid muscle at the top of the arm.



- 3 Next, use the index finger from the opposite hand to find the posterior depression (in the back).



- 4 Where the finger lands on the depression closest to the back is where you will find the point. Be sure to relax the arm before pressing the point.



Helps with these conditions

- adhesive capsulitis (frozen shoulder), especially at the back of the shoulder
- numbness or pain of the shoulder or arm

Gallbladder 20 (Fengchi)

This point is located on the back of the head.

- 1 To locate the point, find the external occipital protuberance, the bony prominence at the back of the head, about one hand's width above the back hairline.



- 2 Slide the tip of the index finger over this prominence until it lands on a depression.



- 3 Next, move the index finger laterally (to the outer side) along the bony ridge about three fingers' width, until it hits a fleshy mound.



- 4 Where the finger lands in the center of this mound is where you will find the point.



Helps with these conditions

- insomnia
- temporal headache
- all conditions on the face
- one-sided headache

The Essential Guide to Self-Acupressure

The Beginner's Guide to Acupressure is an introduction to acupressure for self-treatment and it is primarily dedicated to reducing symptoms of common ailments. This book adapts Traditional Chinese Medicine acupressure techniques to create an easy-to-use program for people to use at home. Acupressure, rooted in the same philosophy as acupuncture, is a treatment in which pressure is applied with the hand or fingers at specific acupoints across the body. Acupressure seeks to unblock and balance the flow of the body's physiological energy, or qi, restoring the energy needed to deal with health issues.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Designed for beginners interested in self-acupressure.
- Includes more than 140 step-by-step photographs and easy-to-follow directions.
- Includes a short history of acupressure and its use.
- Describes how to apply basic acupressure techniques for more than 40 pressure points to ease symptoms associated with ailments such as depression, allergies, carpal tunnel syndrome, constipation, sciatica, the common cold and much more.

AUTHOR BIO

Karin Parramore has been a practicing aromatherapist since 2002 and she obtained her degree in Chinese Medicine a few years later. She has her own clinic and teaches at her alma mater, the National College of Natural Medicine and East West College of the Healing Arts. Karin lives in California.

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MARKETING & PUBLICITY

- Robert Rose will launch a targeted marketing and publicity campaign across North American platforms.
- Extensive national and regional health and medical print and online publicity campaign.
- Blogger and reviewer campaign targeting all health and pain-management sites.
- Influencer outreach to leading acupressure professionals.
- Strategic social media campaign including all author and publisher platforms and channels (Website, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, Newsletters).
- Focus on special online and virtual opportunities for advertising and direct to consumer marketing.