

# Acupuncture and Holistic Health

## by Amy Schiff

Oriental Medicine, that is, Acupuncture and Herbal Therapy, subtly yet powerfully balances our physical, emotional and spiritual aspects, building our energy and strengthening our immune system. The approach of Oriental medicine is a holistic one. It focuses on the complete well-being of the patient to prevent illness and promote greater health for everyone. Therefore, each herbal prescription and acupuncture treatment is custom-designed. Oriental medicine is practiced by the use of Chinese herbs, locating specific points on pathways of vital life energy, or qi (pronounced chee), using touch and hair-thin, disposable needles to stimulate the body to find its' natural balance and ignite its' own healing mechanism.

So, what are these needles? What are these points? What are these pathways? And what do you mean by stimulating energy? Pathways, or meridians, are like rivers of qi flowing through our bodies along specific routes. Each "river" is associated with particular organs, tissues, emotions, seasons and many other vital life forces. When we are in pain, physically, emotionally or spiritually, our body is displaying that something is out of balance. We can think of pain, or blocked energy, as a dam blocking a flowing river, thus causing the energy to flow in a "foreign" direction.

Allergies, for example, may show up as a runny nose, itchy eyes, and swollen sinuses. These symptoms are treated with acupuncture points such as Liver 3, Large Intestine 4, Large Intestine 20 and an herbal formula called Pe Min Kan Wan. For common cold with chills and fever, headache, stiff neck and nasal congestion, we would use Bladder 13, Bladder 15, Governing Vessel 14 and the formula of Cinnamon Twig Decoction (Gui Zhi Tang). To prevent these symptoms from returning, we would use Stomach 36, REN 6, REN 12, Governing Vessel 12 and Bladder 20 in combination with ginger (*Rhizoma Zingiberis*). We are always in search of the patients' personal imbalances. We are then able to create the most appropriate acupuncture treatment and herbal formula to promote and maintain health.

An acupuncture point is a specific area along the pathway at which qi collects. The needles are either used to disperse the blocked energy, or to stimulate places of weakened energy. As a result, the "dam" is lifted, or you could say the areas of the weakened riverbed are repaired. Now the river is able to run freely, allowing our qi to flow without obstruction, to nourish organs and to restore balance and health to our body.

Oriental Medicine has been used as a primary system of healing in Asia for over 5,000 years. It is becoming more widely accepted and used in conjunction with

Western medicine here in the United States. As a result, more insurance companies are recognizing Licensed Acupuncturists as primary health care providers.

Oriental Medicine is used preventively, by regulating our personal imbalances. It is also used for many different ailments such as; pain, injuries, allergies, women's health care, headaches and insomnia, to name a few. Maintaining good health involves incorporating a healthy attitude in all aspects of your life. Paying attention to eating whole foods, having regular exercise, reducing and managing stress and getting enough rest all contribute to a healthy body. As with any decision in life, I find it is especially important to ask questions. The patient-acupuncturist relationship is built on trust and mutual participation in your liveliness.

Amy Schiff is a Licensed Acupuncturist practicing in Santa Rosa, California. After completing her Masters in Traditional Oriental Medicine from Emperors College of Traditional Oriental Medicine in 1992, she spent three months at the People's Hospital #6 in Shanghai, China, as part of an advanced clinical internship. She welcomes your partnership in achieving your maximum well-being. For more information please call (707) 284-9244. Now is the perfect time for a seasonal tune-up. The change in the seasons brings changes in all of nature; leaves fall from the trees, birds fly South, bears hibernate. Winter has arrived and all of us experience changes in our well-being, energy levels, moods and defense systems. Allergies, colds and flu, headaches and insomnia are some of the challenges that confront us. Oriental Medicine, that is, Acupuncture and Herbal therapy, subtly yet powerfully balances our physical, emotional and spiritual aspects, building our energy and strengthening our immune system.