

ACUPUNCTURE FOR MODERN PARENTING

Acupuncture is one of the fastest growing complementary therapies in the West. It is a core part of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which also includes herbs, massage, diet and exercise. The origins of acupuncture stretch back over 2,000 years and its continued endurance as a popular treatment of choice is testament to its effectiveness in treating a wide range of conditions. Modern developments continue to evolve this ancient practice through the work of practitioners and researchers in both China and the West.



So why choose acupuncture? For many people acupuncture offers an alternative to medication, for example, when breastfeeding or to avoid unpleasant side effects of drugs. Some people find that acupuncture is able to offer help when their particular set of symptoms does not fit a pattern recognised by Western medicine and has no available treatments. Others simply wish to explore a different path to health which is more holistic and in tune with their body's own natural

rhythms. And increasingly many people choose an integrated approach to health and use acupuncture safely alongside more conventional treatments to enhance their healing.

Recent press interest in acupuncture has drawn attention to certain specialised applications, particularly in relation to pain relief. Who could forget the BBC's recent coverage of a young Chinese woman undergoing heart surgery with only acupuncture as an analgesic (January 2006)! Yet despite increased enthusiasm about acupuncture backed by a growing body of research, few people know exactly what happens during treatment and the vast array of different illnesses that acupuncture can treat.

Treatment is carried out by inserting very fine needles into points on the body. These points are located on 'channels' in which energy or 'Qi' is known to flow. We become unhealthy or ill when Qi becomes blocked or deficient. The aim of acupuncture is therefore to balance Qi and disperse any blockages that cause illness. One of acupuncture's greatest strengths is a unique diagnosis and corresponding treatment specific to the individual, rather than the 'one size fits all' approach of much Western medicine.

As a holistic therapy, acupuncture treats people physically, mentally and emotionally, encompassing a wide range of problems from the chronic to the acute, from sports injuries to fertility issues. One key area in which research has shown demonstrable benefit is in dealing with those conditions which can arise from the pressures of juggling parenthood and the demands of modern life.

Lower back pain, for example, is a common complaint arising as a result of pregnancy, childbirth or the constant physical strain experienced in the early years of bringing up children. Acupuncture has been shown to be greatly beneficial in addressing this problem, indeed, two studies have recently concluded that patients undergoing acupuncture reported greater improvement in back and leg pain, less interference of pain with normal work and fewer days off work (*British Medical Journal*, March 2006, p.332 and September 2006, p.696-700).



Long-term stress and fatigue are also common conditions experienced by parents that acupuncture is able to treat effectively. When we become stressed, our Qi may begin to stagnate leading to irritability, headaches and insomnia. By stimulating certain points, acupuncture can help to gently move stagnant Qi and thereby relieve many of these symptoms. Indeed, many patients who have acupuncture for other conditions often remark on feelings of relaxation and wellbeing post-treatment.

please feel free to call us on 01422 844841 or visit our website www.hebdenacupuncture.co.uk.



Anyone with young children knows that it is difficult to find time to look after oneself. It is all too easy to dismiss nagging aches or feelings of fatigue and weariness as part and parcel of the parental experience. But looking after your own health should not be seen as a luxury. Rather, it is a necessary part of ensuring that you are properly equipped, mentally and physically, to provide the best care for your little ones. At the Hebden Bridge Acupuncture Centre we are always happy to discuss your own specific health needs in confidence.

Marcus Watts and Jo Hall are members of the British Acupuncture Council (MBAcC) and hold BSc (Hons) in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture. For more information on how acupuncture can help you,