

Acupressure the New Cure for Acid Reflux?

Acupressure is acupuncture without the use of needles. By applying pressure to the acupoints prescribed by ancient Chinese medicine, specific organs and areas of the body may be successfully treated. With this science, the energy of the meridian system called Yin, Yang and Qi is brought into alignment, allowing the body to heal itself.

Traditional Chinese acupuncture has been used to treat digestive disorders for over two thousand years. Recent studies suggest that acupuncture, acupressure and electrical acupoint stimulation applied to Pericardium 6 (P6) reduce relaxations of the lower esophageal sphincter (LES). Relaxation of the LES is the major cause of acid reflux. One study with electrical acupoint stimulation showed a 40% reduction of these LES relaxations in most of the cases studied. This is an astounding claim and could be the beginning of one of the most important discoveries ever made for the treatment of acid reflux.

What is P6? P6, also called Neiguan, is an acupoint located on the underside of the wrist between 2 tendons. If you hold out your hand and bend it toward you, P6 is located in the middle of the wrist approximately two finger-widths from the crease where the hand and arm meet.

What is the LES? The lower esophageal sphincter is a muscular valve located between the esophagus and the stomach, which opens to allow food and liquids into the stomach. It is supposed to close tight to prevent gastric fluids from coming back up into the esophagus. When it becomes relaxed, you have acid reflux. Many things can cause the LES to relax; acidic foods, carbonated beverages, alcohol, tobacco, chocolate and stress, to name a few.

Acupressure to the P6 has been employed for years to relieve nausea and vomiting. Recently it has been used to treat traveler's motion and sea sickness, morning sickness in pregnant women and post operative nausea. Acupressure wrist bands, also called "sea bands", are now being used for this purpose. The wrist band fits snugly on the wrist and has a small plastic button which applies pressure to the P6. It is now believed that these same wrist bands may reduce acid reflux.

You can also treat yourself without the use of wrist bands by using the fingers. Keep in mind that when applying pressure to the P6, the feeling should be a slight numbness, never a sharp pain. All acupoints are normally beside and in between bones, ligaments and tendons.

They are never found on bones, blood vessels or arteries, but in depressions between or beside them.

Interestingly, the P6 is also used to treat insomnia, chest pain, epilepsy, fever and migraines as well as nausea, vomiting and acid reflux. Stimulating this acupoint may be beneficial to the entire body.

Ancient Chinese medicine supports the theory that acupoints connect the internal pathways of energy conduction and that stimulating these points accelerates the flow of this energy. On the other hand, allopathic medicine is just beginning to understand these principals. They attribute the success of acupuncture to nerve signals and chemicals released by the central nervous system, but have no idea how it works. Given enough time, hopefully modern medical science will catch up with these ancient healing methods.

Whatever you believe, acupuncture really does work. It is relaxing and absolutely pain free. The needles used are so thin that you don't even feel them. Acupressure is a simple variation of this theme by which we can treat ourselves without the use of needles or expensive acupuncture sessions. Just find an acupressure chart and start working on yourself. It's also fun to treat others. Even pets benefit from this science. I work on my thirteen year old Jack Russell Terrier, Jack Pot, every morning to relieve him of his allergy symptoms. He is very appreciative, indeed.

I encouraged a friend who recently developed acute gerd to try a pair of the P6 wrist bands, which I bought on line. We found that they actually do work in reducing acid reflux, but only if you have them placed on the wrist so that pressure from the wrist band button is precisely on P6. It took a bit of experimentation, but we were successful after an hour or so. One company on the internet claims that you only need to wear one wrist band. Others suggest that it only works with two. Maybe they are both right – who knows. I do know that this is worth trying if you suffer from acid reflux even if you only have a 40% chance of success. What have you got to loose?

If you want to try the wrist bands, they are available on line and at many health food stores at reasonable prices. You might also consider a massage from someone who specializes in acupressure and have them work on the P6. I find that a visit to my reflexologist is always beneficial. But whatever you do, it is always good to keep an open mind about healing in general and to exercise your right to treat yourself. We all have the ability to heal ourselves. As far as acid

reflux is concerned, there are many natural ways to at least keep it under control, if not actually cure it.

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