



# Chinese Medicine News

from the office of Michael Waterhouse, MA, OMD, LAc

## MANAGEMENT OF IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS) WITH ACUPUNCTURE AND CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE.

IBS, often called Functional Abdominal pain, refers to a complex of symptoms that include bloating, abdominal pain and irregular bowel movements. From a Western medical perspective, there are no apparent physical causes. The symptoms seem to arise as a result of abnormal muscular activity, hypersensitivity of the visceral nervous system and dysregulation of the brain-gut connection. Studies have suggested that as many as 10 to 20 percent of the U.S. population have this disorder. Sometimes antispasmodic medication or low dose antidepressants can relieve the condition, but the general consensus now is that an integrated approach works best.

Acupuncture treatment has been used for hundreds of years to treat this constellation of symptoms. It has been shown to normalize function generally in the body. In the case of IBS, the increase in circulation to the abdomen normalizes muscular tension to ease cramping and the normalization of gastric secretions enhances the digestive process to resolve feelings of bloating. Another mechanism by which acupuncture helps relieve the symptoms of IBS is its effect on the brain-gut connection. Stimulation of acupuncture points calm the nervous system through increases in the production of opiate like substances; it

also normalizes dopamine and serotonin output. (Ninety percent of the body's serotonin is located in the gut!) From a Chinese medical perspective, the goal is always to balance the energy of the organs, and to move any stagnation in the circulation of blood and qi. The unobstructed flow of Liver energy is critical to resolving the sensations of cramping and bloating, while regulation of the Stomach and Spleen qi helps to normalize bowel movements.

Chinese Herbal Medicine has also been used for millennia to treat a wide range of digestive disorders. In 1998, a double blind placebo controlled study in Australia demonstrated that a four-month course of Chinese Herbal medicine significantly increased patients' quality of life by reducing their IBS symptoms compared to placebo herbal pills and that the improvement was maintained 14 weeks after discontinuing the treatment.

In addition to the Traditional Chinese Medical treatment of IBS, it is my experience that an integrated approach to the management of the symptoms is very important. Diet and exercise certainly play a significant role. Perhaps most important is some type of regular relaxation regimen, whether that is Yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, Qi Gong or a guided imagery program.

## GASTRO ESOPHAGEAL REFLUX DISEASE (GERD)

That nasty burning sensation that so frequently ruins a delicious meal is often controlled by a number of over the counter or prescription medications. Unfortunately these medications can sometimes mask the symptoms, but not heal the cause of the problem. There are a number of things that can help this problem naturally. They include eating smaller, more frequent meals, paying attention to see if a particular food triggers the burning sensation, not lying down after eating, maintaining a healthy weight and practicing relaxation techniques on a regular basis. Especially in the early stages of this condition the combination of Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine can significantly alter the course of the disease, not only relieving the symptoms, but addressing the root of the problem.

**"I'm so grateful to Mike Waterhouse for his expertise, professionalism and infinite knowledge. His contribution to my good health and well being and in particular my chronic abdominal pain has been invaluable."**

S.K. New York.



**"If you look for the truth outside of yourself, it gets further and further away."**

The Newsletter will be published several times per year to inform patients interested in the rapidly evolving world of Chinese Medicine. Please feel free to talk to me if you need more information or have questions about this or related fields. You can always contact me via e mail or through my web site.

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