

Breathe Right, Asthma and Allergies

Breathing and sinus problems are a common condition in our culture and frequently seen in the clinics of Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) practitioners. Asthma, exercise-induced asthma, sinus allergies, hay fever, seasonal allergies, and the like, are all regarded as related conditions and can be treated using various TCM techniques.

In TCM theory there is a dynamic link between the lungs, sinuses, immunity and the skin. These are all considered part of the same system. Immunity is believed to start with the skin and the lungs as the outermost defense system of the body. In a way, it is this system that regulates what enters the body and what does not. It is the malfunction of this system that leads to asthma and allergies. These conditions are a deficiency in the ability of the body to properly regulate how it responds to the environment (mold, pet hair, pollen, etc.). Therefore, changing these reactions is a matter of strengthening those regulatory functions within the body.

There are various diagnostic criteria based on the particular symptoms of the patient that help the TCM practitioner develop a treatment strategy. Treatment tools can include acupuncture, herbal medicine, food therapy, etc., and can help the body function better. Many times this involves clearing acute symptoms and then providing herbal supplementation to help strengthen the underlying functions that allowed the malfunction in the first place.

This is a departure from the Western biomedical approach, which tends to try to relieve symptoms, as well as identify and avoid environmental factors. In TCM, the assumption is that you can't avoid the environment completely, and that the problem is not the environment, but your response to it. Therefore treatment is less about symptoms, and more about changing the dynamics of the body in a positive way.

The best time to treat these types of conditions from a TCM perspective is when they are not active. It is easier to prepare the body to deal with spring allergies in the winter than it is to treat the acute symptoms once spring has arrived. For those who have year-round chronic issues, the treatment tends to be based on long-term use of herbs and acupuncture, with occasional use of treatments specific to treating the acute occurrences when they happen.

Ultimately the goal is to help the patient better deal with the environment. Part of that process is to understand the dynamics specific to that particular patient and how lifestyle and food factors affect the body. In this way the patient can understand how to better prepare and cope with challenging environmental factors, rather than just trying to avoid them. That control is important for moving forward in helping your body, rather than just knocking down the ever-worsening symptoms.



Bock Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine

Ancient wisdom for our modern age

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