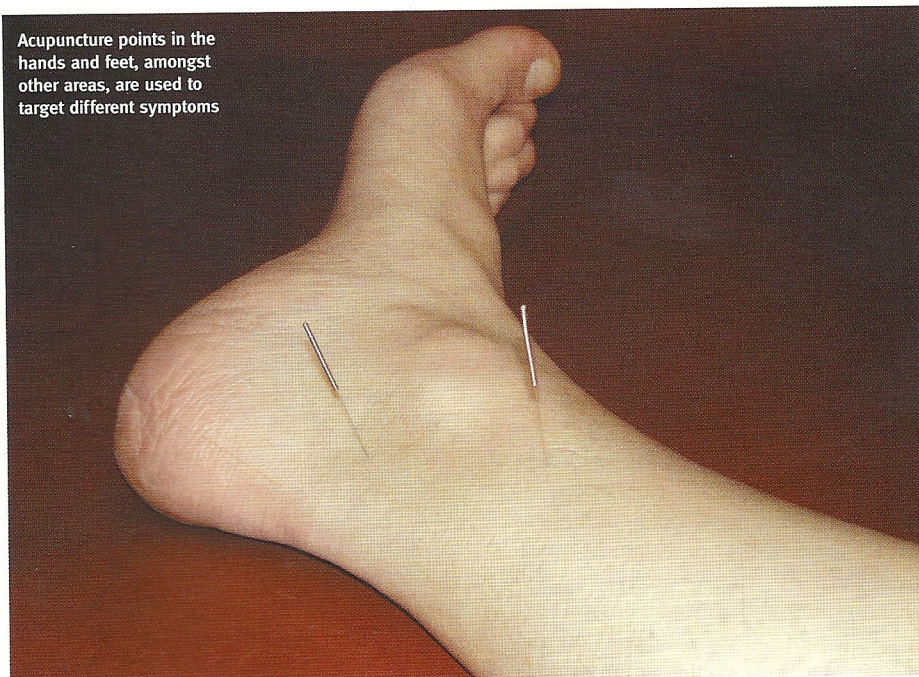




Acupuncture points in the hands and feet, amongst other areas, are used to target different symptoms



Balancing midlife

Complementary health practitioner **Jacqueline Smirl** looks at how homeopathy, acupuncture and nutritional therapy can provide natural ways to avoid hot flushes and menopausal symptoms

The best way to avoid any menopausal symptoms is to understand why these symptoms occur and why they are so different in each individual. The Western model has no explanation for this but other cultures and medical models such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and homeopathy take a more holistic approach. The ancient Chinese have the oldest literature on gynaecology. It says that exhaustion of Tiangui is responsible for menopause. Tiangui is similar to a sexual hormone which has the function of promoting the body's growth and development from birth. Tiangui is controlled by the kidney qi. Teachings say that it is nourished by the food essence and is gradually exhausted as the kidney qi is depleted with age. In women this occurs around 49, although it can vary from ages of 45 to 55. Once Tiangui is exhausted, this leaves the body in a state of imbalance between yin (cold) and yang (hot) and it is the body's inability to restore this balance that causes the uncomfortable symptoms.

Alternatively, Colin Griffith, a renowned homeopath and teacher, explains in *The Practical Handbook of Homoeopathy* that in some ancient cultures the womb was considered as the "lower heart"; and the energy that kept it functioning creatively needs to rise to the "upper heart" at menopause. Hence, the energy that flows through the reproductive system during the procreative years does not stop at the menopause. It simply changes. It shifts to the heart centre. Colin suggests that HRT can prevent this change physiologically and psychologically.

Homeopathy has always been very effective in relieving symptoms of hormonal imbalance, which occurs at menopause. However the body may have been in a state of imbalance prior to the menopause, and therefore constitutional remedies are often used to treat symptoms during this period. Apart from hot flushes, with or without sweating, women can experience other symptoms such as general dryness, insomnia, lethargy, extreme anxiety,

depression, palpitation, poor memory, tinnitus, incontinence, loss of libido, hair loss and weight gain. The cycles can become irregular or suddenly stop altogether. Constitutional remedies can alleviate a whole range of these symptoms. At times when they are not as effective as expected, other remedies dealing with layers obstructing the "cure" can be used, for example remedies for "never been well since..." childbirth, the pill, divorce and so on can be used to clear up the layers.

I believe that homeopathy successfully deals with all the physical and emotional symptoms experienced during menopause. However, nutritional therapy as well as other therapies such as Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture can enhance its effects.

Homeopathy

The main remedies used are Sepia, Lachesis, Pulsatilla, Calcarea Carbonica, Sulphur, Graphites, Tuberculinum, Psorinum and many more, addressing most major menopausal symptoms. Other remedies are more specific - say for hot flushes of head and face only.

For example, a woman requiring Lachesis would be showing the following combination of symptoms: hot flushes, sweating, red face, irritable, angry, suspicious, dizziness and

fainting, poor memory, confusion, talkative. Symptoms would be worse on waking, with tight clothing, drinking alcohol or hot drinks. The symptoms would be better in cool air, cold drink, when eating and with loose clothing.

However, if a woman was requiring Sepia, she would be irritable but weepy and depressed, indifferent, have heavy irregular bleeding before menopause, loss of libido, sallow face. Her symptoms would be worse in the evening, and with cold and damp.

Your homeopath will need to take a comprehensive history after which they will be able to ascertain which remedy or remedies would be effective for you.

Acupuncture

In Chinese medicine there are five syndrome differentiations for menopause. The internal organs have a different function under Chinese medical theory, therefore the terminology used below does not have the same meaning as in Western medicine.

- Kidney yin deficiency - symptoms include PMT, scanty menses, hot flushes with sweating, dizziness, tinnitus, dry eyes, sore and weak knees and waist, irritability, insomnia, red tongue with less coating, thready rapid pulse. This is treated by nourishing the yin and reducing the heat. The herbal formula is Da Bu Yin Wan.

- Kidney yang deficiency - symptoms include irregular menses - heavy but pale, lassitude, cold limbs, swelling in lower limbs, loose stools, profuse discharge thin in quality, pale and puffy tongue, deep and weak pulse. This is treated by warming and toning the kidney yang. The herbal formula is Ba Wei Di Huang Wan.

- Kidney yin and yang deficiency - symptoms include irregular menses which could be profuse or scanty, hot flushes with sweating alternating with chills and cold limbs, sore and weak knees and waist, lethargy and dizziness, purple tongue, weak pulse. This is treated by nourishing both the kidney yin and yang. The herbal formula is Er Xian Tang.

- Heart and spleen deficiency - symptoms include irregular menses - scanty or profuse and pale in colour, lethargy, palpitation, insomnia, poor appetite and loose stools, tongue is pale and puffy with thin white coating, weak pulse. This is treated by toning the spleen and heart. The herbal formula is Gui Pi Tang.

- Liver qi stagnation with fire - symptoms include irregular menses - scanty or profuse

and dark in colour with clots, hot flushes with sweating accompanied by feeling of fullness in the chest, lower abdominal pain, belching, regurgitation, irritability, depression, red tongue with yellow coating, rapid and taut pulse. This is treated by soothing the liver qi and reducing the stagnated fire. The herbal formula is Jia Wei Xiao Yao San.

Nutritional therapy

To reduce heat, cooling and cold foods are recommended as well as bitter and sour flavours. Cooling foods include the fruits pineapple, tangerine, melon, orange, lemon and kiwi, vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumber, spinach and endives, salads, mung bean sprouts, wheat, barley and yoghurt. Black or bitter tea is also cooling.

Generally, a diet of raw food, fruits and vegetables stabilizes the blood sugar. Wild yam nourishes the yin which is depleted by the internal heat.

Avoid alcohol and dairy products, red meat, spicy food, sugar and caffeine as they trigger hot flushes by heating the system. Soy products regulate the oestrogen levels and reduce the menopausal symptoms.

Supplements

Speak to your nutritional therapist before taking any supplements. However, in general it is beneficial to consider taking daily: vitamin C 500-1000 mg, vitamin E 400 IU, EFAs 1000 mg, vitamin D 400 IU, vitamin B-complex 50-100 mg, Boron 3mg. These treatments can be used in conjunction with one another as some work

What do I do?

Well, first and foremost I am a mum - the most important, difficult and fulfilling job around. After that I usually say: I am a homeopath, Traditional Chinese Medicine and acupuncture practitioner; I also practice cosmetic acupuncture. Oh yes, I'm also a fashion and textiles designer! And at times a frustrated artist...

I came into complementary healthcare because of my autistic son. It was when homeopathy magically helped my son's allergic condition that I looked into complementary therapies. I was surprised by their effectiveness and simplicity as well as their safety factor. I now treat other children with autism, their families and a variety of chronic and acute conditions with great results. I am passionate about natural healthcare and nutrition and believe in life without the use of drugs.

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on the energetic level and others on the nutritional and physical level. They are useful for premature menopause too. Using these treatments will also ensure that osteoporosis will not occur. HRT is not necessary when there are so many safe and effective alternatives available. ■



Homeopathy can treat menopausal symptoms