



Acupuncture and Bell's Palsy

Anyone who has experienced Bell's Palsy will tell you how disturbing the symptoms can be. One of the reasons it is so disturbing is that it seems to happen to people out of the blue - one day they are living their lives and things are fine and the next day paralysis has struck. Doctors have a handful of possibilities for why it happens and when these are ruled out - patients are told the cause is unknown. The symptoms are drastic! Inability to close the eye all the way causes extreme dry eye, which affects vision and one's ability to get adequate sleep. Patients are walking around constantly applying eye drops. The closing of the mouth is affected as well which makes it impossible to drink liquids and to control one's saliva. What I hear from patients most of all is the embarrassment of being in the world with people and not being able to communicate at full capacity. We take for granted how significant facial expressions are when trying to make our way in the world.

Everyone who suffers with Bell's Palsy should seek out the help of an experienced acupuncturist. Acupuncture can help tremendously when it comes to rehabilitating the muscles of the face. Acupuncturists see Bell's Palsy as a condition that affects the meridians of the face, which in our medicine, is mostly the meridian of the stomach. Our treatment principal is to move energy up towards the face and stimulate the flow of blood and fluids back to the facial muscles. You may be wondering why Bell's Palsy affects the meridian of the stomach. To explain this, I will delve into some theory behind how energy is created and lost within a body's energy system.

In Chinese medicine, energy comes from two different sources. The first is the energetic potential we are born with - in Western medical terms this would be one's DNA or inheritance of genes from the mother and father. The second is the energy that the body derives from food. This conversion of energy is said to happen in the stomach and spleen in Chinese Medicine. When this system is weak, which it is quite often in Americans, a person is more susceptible to many imbalances one of them being Bell's Palsy.

In my practice I am looking at one's medical history and lifestyle habits over the past several decades. How many children have they had, did they breastfeed their children, how have they taken care of themselves in terms of diet and nutrition, how they have taken care of themselves in terms of good wellness practices.



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In terms of onset of the condition I am looking at whether there has been an acute case of stress or was the person exposed to extreme cases of cold or heat or damp. Weather can affect the onset of a depletion of the meridians of the face. The face is usually unprotected from the elements.

The best case-scenario for optimizing the effects of acupuncture is to be treated as soon as possible after onset. Patients have come to me up to two months after onset and their recovery is slower but is still facilitated by acupuncture. The rate of recovery has to do with your age, the amount of energy reserves your body has, how well you are digesting, how nourishing your diet is and has been and how well you care for yourself and have done in the past. Some people recover from the initial onset but swear they never fully recovered. Please don't be one of these unfortunate ones and increase your chances of recovery by seeing a skilled acupuncture clinician in your local area.

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