

Pediatric Acupuncture

Occasionally we are asked if acupuncture is good for children and if we treat them. The answers are yes and yes! In fact, we love treating kids – it is such a treat for us! But beyond the fact that we enjoy it, kids generally respond really well to acupuncture. Kids seem to always be coming down with something, since their immune systems aren't fully developed and they are frequently exposed to others who are sick.

We can help with many common ailments that children suffer from:

- common colds
- coughs
- allergies
- asthma
- ear infections
- constipation
- diarrhea
- stomach aches
- bed wetting
- irritability
- ADD and ADHD
- and more.

The most obvious question one would ask about treating kids is, "aren't they afraid of needles?" Some are, but many aren't, especially when we are able to do a demonstration first (usually on Mom or Dad, and/or ourselves!) and let them try one needle to see how they do with it. Usually they are amazed that they hardly feel it (we always use the little needles, which are super thin, on kids), and we tend to use fewer points with kids.

The greatest challenge can be due to a child's age and disposition. Toddlers and those who tend to be fussy and fidgety may not be able to sit still with the needles. Infants are usually easy to treat, and can sit on their mother or father's lap with their needles in. Young children (usually age 4–10) can sit on the couch in our reception area with their parent or caregiver, have their needles inserted and read books together. In some cases the child will doze off, but if not, he or she is likely to get quiet and sleepy in a pleasant way. We usually keep the needles in for 20–30 minutes for children. Older kids can sit in the treatment room as long as they can sit quietly for awhile.

Chinese herbal medicine can also be helpful, especially for respiratory conditions, although acupuncture alone may do the trick depending on

the symptoms and severity. Herbs sometimes taste bad, but if they're mixed into food (like yogurt or applesauce) kids usually tolerate them.

One of the most critical aspects to children's health is a healthy diet. Depending on a child's health concerns, we can also offer some recommendations for dietary modifications according to Chinese medicine principles which can help. For example, children who frequently get ear infections or coughs with phlegm or who don't digest well would do well to eat cooked food rather than raw food, warm food rather than cold food, and consume minimal amounts of sugars, wheat and nut butters.

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