



# Three Underlying Causes of Pain

## How Acupuncture Can Help



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# *A Typical Morning.....*

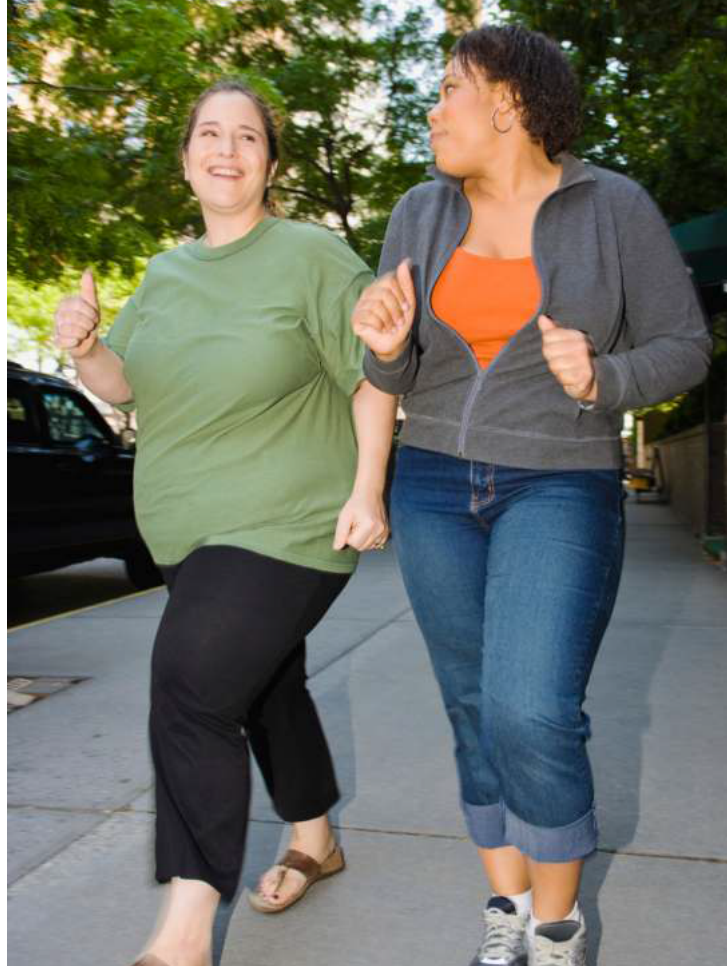
You wake up bright eyed and bushy tailed and leap out of bed.

A few good stretches and you scamper downstairs, two at a time! With a bounce in your step you get on with some chores: empty the dishwasher, bending easily and fluidly, prepare the veggies for your evening meal, hands strong and supple.

A twenty minute exercise sequence and then it's off to walk the dog. No difficulties bending over to pick up those little "parcels" that Fido leaves for you to deal with!!

The many tasks that lay ahead on this day don't overwhelm you; your shoulders are relaxed and your mind is clear.

Isn't that how it goes? For many, the answer is a resounding **NO!!**



If you have pain then this is probably the exact opposite of what your average day feels like.

Maybe you don't call it pain. Maybe you call it discomfort, tension, or something that doesn't feel quite right. Maybe you can't remember when your joints didn't ache or your back wasn't stiff.

Being pain-free is a necessary component of good health. It's much easier to live a good life when you feel good. You may attribute how you feel to your lifestyle, age, or genetics. But now it's time to look at the whole picture and learn how to reduce your pain.







## *Some Startling Statistics*

It is estimated that 1 in 5 people will experience chronic pain during <sup>their</sup> life, with prevalence increasing with age. The chronic pain definition relates to pain lasting for more than three months. The following 2020 stats make for some grim reading!

- Around **1.5 billion** people suffer from chronic pain globally.
- 40 million people in the US suffer with chronic pain.
- **Low back and neck pain** are the foremost causes of disability.
- 1.9 billion people are affected by **chronic headaches**.
- 88% of patients with chronic pain suffer from an **additional chronic condition**.
- Almost 11 million Americans complain of high impact chronic pain (HICP.)
- More than 80% of patients with HICP are unable to work.
- Chronic pain and **depression** often go together.
- Adequate pain control may include the resolution of **anxiety and depression**.
- Chronic pain in the US costs the economy \$560 billion annually.
- The presence of acute or chronic pain is the most significant clinical risk factor for another chronic pain development.

(Sources: PubMed, NCBI, BMJ Open, NIH)



# *Acute pain...*

The cause of acute pain is often very simple. It involves a one-time event or trauma that produces an acute injury with accompanying intense, sometimes excruciating, pain.

Your nervous system uses this pain to get your attention in order to avoid further injury.

Following an acute injury, pain usually decreases and becomes a more subtle message that you need to protect and rest the injured area.

Ideally your injury heals, your body recovers, and the pain signal is no longer needed. However, when pain from an acute trauma isn't fully resolved by the body's own healing process, it becomes **chronic pain**.

If you've experienced a recent injury or trauma it's wise to get it sorted out sooner rather than later.

You could choose acupuncture, physical therapy, osteopathy, chiropractic care or massage therapy.

At Integrative Acupuncture we advocate for **acupuncture to support your natural healing process**. It shouldn't take many treatments at the acute stage







# *Chronic pain...*

Disease and acute trauma are at opposite ends of the medical spectrum and there is no doubt that modern medicine can work wonders in these areas.

In between these two ends of the spectrum is a huge gap of chronic issues, ailments, and symptoms, including chronic pain. The discomfort that seems to be the most pervasive yet mystifying for people is chronic pain.

However, even though chronic pain has a "name," it is very poorly understood. Medical science and pharmaceuticals can't cure it, hence it is "chronic." These modalities can only attempt to manage the symptoms, usually with painkillers.

Before pain becomes chronic, it usually starts as what most people would describe as "normal" everyday discomfort.

You've probably experienced feelings of stiffness, soreness, throbbing, heaviness, tenderness, and tightness on occasion. When these sensations become a daily discomfort over a prolonged period of time, you realize the pain isn't going away. You now have chronic pain.

Sufferers are often give the "diagnosis" of chronic pain syndrome but it doesn't really mean anything. We all like a diagnosis and usually expect that alongside it comes a treatment or cure - not the case with chronic pain.

Chronic pain is just a mystery! What use does it serve to be "told" for years that part of your body hurts.







## *Chronic pain signs...*

The following symptoms, which many think are normal discomforts are as warning signs:

- Feeling stiff when you wake up, hobbling downstairs!
- Feeling achey when you get out of a chair or after exercise (other than normal muscle ache from a new exercise, for example.)
- Finding yourself frequently adjusting, stretching, cracking, or rubbing your neck or back to try to relieve tension.
- Stiffness and swelling in your hands and feet.
- Unexplainable aches or stiffness in multiple areas of the body.

Other symptoms that often accompany these signs include:

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- Gas or indigestion, regardless of what is eaten.
- Feeling exhausted or having a mild headache in the afternoon - the "afternoon slump."
- Feeling exhausted by midday - nodding off in that meeting!
- Waking up with anxiety or having mood swings.
- Feeling bloated or struggling with weight.

Of course, some chronic pain sufferers may not have the benefit of these warning signs. Their pain may stem from complex illnesses, surgeries, traumas.







You may have already learned the hard way that trying to manage pain can be exhausting, expensive, time consuming, and ineffective.

Yet, the common belief is that once discomfort and pain become part of your daily life, “managing” it is the only option.

A better solution is to look at the **underlying causes** of some of the warning signs mentioned previously; those **pre-chronic pain signals** that we shouldn't ignore.

These causes include:

- **inflammation**, the subtle kind
- **emotions**, the stuck kind
- **poor circulation** , often due to the above

A **holistic** approach including a combination of **acupuncture, nutrition, and/or exercise** can help you resolve these symptoms **before** they become chronic issues.

# *A better solution!*





**I**nflammation and chronic pain go hand in hand.

We aren't talking about acute inflammation here, the kind that occurs after a bee sting or spraining an ankle or banging into the open dishwasher door (ouch!)

With this kind of inflammation, the swelling, stiffness, and heat are so **subtle** that you don't even realise they are happening. This subtlety is why chronic inflammation is referred to as low-level or **low-grade inflammation**.

Studies show that chronic inflammation, not compression or wear and tear, is the primary cause of joint damage. Chronically inflamed tissues in and around the joints are overheated, stiff, and swollen with **stagnant chemicals and fluids**.

But chronic inflammation doesn't just damage joints – it also wreaks havoc on your **immune system** and other aspects of your health, dramatically accelerating the ageing process.

You can stop chronic inflammation and can even reverse many of its effects! Most chronic inflammation stems from our **gut**. Even if you aren't experiencing digestive symptoms, these other symptoms of chronic inflammation in your body are a sign that you do have inflammation in your gut.

The good news is, you can get this under control.







Stress is a condition that our bodies are designed to deal with. Any veering away from "the norm" is classed as a stress and we have systems in place to automatically correct it and return conditions back to normal.

All of these involuntary or automatic functions are regulated in the body by the **autonomic nervous system** through a sophisticated chemical, electrical, and hormonal orchestration. How well you slept last night, how fast your heart is beating, when you last had a bowel movement, or how sluggish your metabolism seems – you can't control these consciously, but they are constantly being regulated in your body.

It's a good thing you don't have to think about the five hundred functions of your liver, how often you need to blink, or when food is ready to move from our stomach to your intestines. Your body is doing this for you, and it's an intricate dance that is perfectly balanced. **Until it isn't!**

The subdivisions of the autonomic nervous system are:


- the **sympathetic nervous system** - involved with activity and our fight or flight responses, the world of adrenalin (short term stress) and **cortisol** (long term stress)
- the **parasympathetic nervous system** - involved with essential functions and restoration, sometimes called the "rest and digest" system; the world of sleep, digestion, recovery.

In our modern world we are often stuck in the **fight or flight** system and don't allow the **rest and restore** system to play it's role.

The natural response of the body to stress is **inflammation** (and we've just read what problems that can cause!) but if we don't allow the parasympathetic system enough opportunity to counteract this we can get into trouble!







**C**hronic stress or unresolved stress can lead to chronically elevated **cortisol levels**. Over time its efforts to reduce inflammation can cause problems with our **immunity**.

Raised cortisol can increase acidity, unbalance our gut bacteria, cause rapid ageing, depression, adrenal fatigue - all due to the **cycle of stress, cortisol and inflammation** going on in our body.

This slowly exhausts every system of your body and your body's resources, all before you even know it's happening. Your regulation system has to prioritise which functions get attention and energy, and it opts to monitor your vital functions, such as heart rate and breathing, instead of hair growth and muscle repair. This makes you look older and feel exhausted, and achy, stiff, weak, or swollen.

Common occurrences such as yawning in the afternoon, gas or heartburn, cloudy-headedness, bloating, dry skin or hair, anxiety, and tired muscles when you exercise can all be signs.

These are your subtle signals. If you pay attention and support your **Restore and Digest** modes, you can turn them around in a short period of time. But we usually view these symptoms as normal and temporary inconveniences and move on.

Meanwhile, when your regulation is in **Stress mode** or protective mode, your gut isn't processing food or eliminating efficiently, and your cellular repair is slow. These slowdowns cause **excess waste and toxins** to build up in the body. It can collect like sediment in the connective tissue and joints, causing pain and discomfort. You can call this **stuck stress**

This leads to the next cause of pain:





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oor circulation can result from stuck or stagnant stress. This **stagnant stress** accumulates, which causes the fluid flow and supportive environment in the system to decline further.

Having adequate circulation of fluids and waste in your tissue and organs is vital for its function and daily repair. Your capacity for healing and repair is completely reliant on your cells' ability to take in healthy fluid, nutrients, hormones, neurotransmitters and emit waste.

When the environment around your cells is stagnant, cell walls seal themselves off and resist absorption. This makes cell renewal impossible. Cell renewal is what keeps you looking and feeling young.

Slow cell renewal accelerates not only ageing and appearance, but accelerates bone and muscle loss, impairs organ function, impedes immune response, and slows metabolism.

You may find yourself with symptoms like weight gain, low libido, chronic constipation, headaches, fatigue, low back pain, anxiety, and insomnia.

By the time you have these symptoms, there's a significant underlying problem. You need to get back to a balanced state.





# *So, what can you do?*

## *Reduce inflammation:*

A large part of this is going to involve managing your diet and healing your gut:

- Remove food toxins from your diet – sugar, transfats, additives, sweeteners etc.
- Eat real food – whole, unprocessed and unrefined food
- Eat fermented foods and take a probiotic
- **Get acupuncture**

## *Reduce stress:*

Easier said than done, I know. But there are plenty of strategies out there and we usually know what they are. The difficulty comes in implementing them:

- Learn to say no
- The body is better for movement, the mind better for rest – try to achieve a better balance here.
- Reduce sugar – often not linked to stress but it definitely is!
- **Get acupuncture**

## *Improve circulation:*

We spend far too much time just sitting: at our desks, on the sofa, driving. Our bodies are not designed for this!:

- Movement, any kind is better than just sitting!
- **Get some acupuncture**

## *Did you spot the common denominator there?*







Acupuncture can help with all three of these underlying causes of pain.

According to acupuncture theory, many causes of pain are caused by something referred to as “stagnation.” Qi and Blood are two vital substances in Chinese medicine and need to flow freely. Free flow means no pain.

A more Western explanation is that acupuncture can provide relief from pain by:

- reducing inflammation
- releasing endorphins, our natural painkillers
- improving blood flow
- setting up a local healing response

Acupuncture is also an extremely relaxing treatment. Therefore, if you suffer from stress, it can help you to unwind at the end of a busy day. When your mind relaxes, so does your body, allowing problems to simply melt away before they become chronic issues.

*A better  
solution!*



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# *Thank You...*

.....for taking the time to read this, We hope it has helped to start you off on the right track in terms of understanding that by noticing and tackling the subtle warning signs you can deal with. or even prevent, chronic pain.

TCM considers the Mind, Body and Spirit as a whole. No symptom is considered in isolation; we like to get to the root of the problem.

## *Schedule An Appointment*



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