



KATIE BRINDLE

Osteoarthritis Guide

Treatment techniques based in Chinese medicine



Overview

Osteoarthritis, known in Western medicine as a degenerative joint disease, is characterised by the breakdown of joint cartilage and underlying bone, leading to the pain, swelling and stiffness, especially in the hip, knee and thumb joints, that we associate with the disease. The condition is often attributed to ageing and wear and tear but can also be influenced by genetic factors. Chinese Medicine views Osteoarthritis, primarily, a result of Qi and blood stagnation, leading to "pathogenic factors" invading the body, such as an accumulation of dampness, cold, and wind, which can create disharmony and imbalance in the smooth flow of Qi and blood, leading to the symptoms of Osteoarthritis.

Causes

- Qi and Blood Stagnation: Impaired flow of Qi and blood in the body, often due to sedentary lifestyle or injury, is seen as a primary cause, leading to joint pain and stiffness.
- Kidney Deficiency: In Chinese Medicine, the Kidneys are believed to oversee the health of the bones. Kidney deficiency, particularly as we age, can lead to weakened bones and joints.
- Dampness and Cold Accumulation: Exposure to cold and damp conditions or internal imbalances can lead to the accumulation of dampness and cold in the joints, exacerbating pain and stiffness.

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Organs and Emotions Implicated

Chronic emotional stress can severely disrupt the flow of qi in the body. Each organ has specific negative emotions attached to it which, if left unresolved, can manifest as physical problems:

- **Kidneys and Fear:** The Kidneys, the root of Yin and Yang energies in the body, are crucial for bone health. Fear, the negative emotion most associated with the Kidneys, can have a deep influence on our Kidney health, and by extension the health of our bones. Chronic fear or deep-seated insecurities can weaken the Kidney Qi, leading to a decline in the health of the bones and joints which will contribute to the development or worsening of Osteoarthritis symptoms.
- **Liver and Anger:** The Liver is responsible for the smooth flow of Qi throughout the body, including the smooth flow of our emotions. Anger, frustration and resentment are the negative emotions most associated with the Liver so if these emotions are not managed properly, they can lead to Liver Qi stagnation. It is this stagnation that can manifest as joint stiffness and pain. Frustration and anger can then exacerbate the pain, creating a cycle of emotional and physical discomfort.
- **Spleen and Worry:** Our Spleen plays a key role in digestion and the transformation of food into Qi and blood. Excessive worry and overthinking are the negative emotions of the Spleen and when these emotions become chronic they can weaken Spleen Qi, leading to an accumulation of dampness in the body and it is this dampness that can settle in the joints, causing pain and stiffness typical of Osteoarthritis.

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- Heart and Joy: In Chinese Medicine, the Heart is considered the ruler of all emotions. Whilst joy is generally considered to be the positive emotion of the Heart, when it leads to excessive excitement or constant fluctuations in our emotional state, it can disturb the Heart's delicate Shen. It is this imbalance that can then affect the Liver and its ability to ensure the smooth flow of Qi, which may then influence the severity of Osteoarthritis symptoms.
- Lungs and Grief: The Lungs can also play their part in the symptoms of Osteoarthritis. The negative emotions of the Lungs are grief and sadness, so if we experience prolonged sadness or unprocessed grief it can impair Lung function, constricting the flow of Qi which can then contribute to an accumulation of emotional toxicity which may manifest in the joints, contributing to pain and stiffness. Strengthening our Lungs to improve Qi flow and balance emotions is, therefore, an integral role in the management of the condition.

Acupressure Points for Asthma

Acupressure is a technique that can easily be performed as part of your self-care practices. Gentle pressure is applied to specific points on the body with fingers or an acupressure tool to help clear blockages in the meridians, the pathways of the body through which qi flows.

GB-34 (Yánglíngquán)

Location: On the outer side of the leg, just below the knee, in the depression anterior and inferior to the head of the fibula.

Why: This point is known as the influential point of tendons. It is known to help smooth the Liver and Gallbladder, disperse wind-dampness in the joints and alleviate pain, making it particularly effective for joint issues, including those caused by Osteoarthritis.

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SP-6 (Sānyīnjiāo)

Location: This point is located on the inner side of the lower leg. To find it, place four fingers above your inner ankle bone. The point lies just behind the shin bone (tibia), in a tender area often found just above the highest peak of the inner ankle bone.

Why: SP-6 is a crossing point of the Spleen, Liver and Kidney meridians, beneficial for balancing and strengthening these three organs which are crucial for joint health. It is a particularly helpful point for nourishing the Yin and blood, which will strengthen the Kidneys.

SP-9 (Yīnlíngquán):

Location: On the inner leg, just below the knee in the depression of the lower border of the bony prominence (medial condyle) of the tibia.

Why: This key point on the Spleen meridian is especially effective for resolving dampness within the body, which can help to alleviate the pain and swelling associated with Osteoarthritis. It will also strengthen the Spleen, which will help to prevent the accumulation of dampness in the future.

KID-3 (Tàixī)

Location: This point is located on the inner side of the foot. Find the highest point of the inner ankle, and then slide your finger down into the depression between the ankle bone and the Achilles tendon.

Why: As the source point of the Kidney meridian, KID-3 is used to strengthen Kidney energy, which is essential for bone health.

BL-60 (Kūnlún):

Location: Behind the ankle joint, in the depression between the prominence of the external malleolus and the Achilles tendon.

Why: BL-60 is a point that can help to clear heat, activates the Bladder channel and promotes Qi and blood flow. It is especially effective in alleviating pain and stiffness in the lower back and legs, often associated with Osteoarthritis.

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LI-4 (Hégǔ):

Location: On the back of the hand, on the fleshy part of the webbing between thumb and index finger.

Why: This point is commonly used for its powerful pain-relieving properties. It can promote the circulation of Qi and blood, which can help reduce pain and inflammation.

Yang Sheng Practices

There are many practices, lifestyle choices, self-care tools and supplements that can be used to help manage the symptoms and the root cause of Osteoarthritis, including:

- **Qigong:** This gentle practice combines mindful movement, breath and meditation to enhance the flow of Qi in the body. Improved Qi circulation will help to strengthen the organs, including the Kidneys and Liver, which are vital in the management of Osteoarthritis. Additionally, the gentle movements of Qigong can improve joint flexibility which can reduce stiffness and pain.
- **Meditation and Breathwork:** This can significantly reduce stress and promote emotional balance to positively influence the Liver, which is sensitive to emotional disturbances. A calm and balanced Liver ensures a smooth flow of Qi and blood, crucial for joint health. Breathwork can also enhance Lung capacity and efficiency, important for overall energy and vitality, indirectly supporting joint health.
- **Gua Sha and Tapping:** Helpful in stimulating the skin and muscles, improving blood circulation and removing blockages within the meridians of the body. This can help to alleviate pain and stiffness in the joints, enhance organ function and dispel pathogenic factors such as dampness and cold, often implicated in Osteoarthritis.

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- Adequate Rest: Proper rest is essential for the body's healing and rejuvenation processes and vital for Kidney support, in particular. A short nap in the afternoon can be especially beneficial for the Kidneys, the source of our energy. Resting helps to conserve and replenish Kidney Qi, which is essential for bone and joint health, and in managing the symptoms of Osteoarthritis.
- Diet Therapy: A balanced diet, particularly one that supports the Spleen and Kidneys, is so important as foods that nourish these organs and reduce dampness can go a long way in alleviating joint symptoms. Warm, cooked foods support the Spleen, whilst foods rich in minerals and nutrients strengthen the Kidneys. Limiting inflammatory foods, such as the “4 Whites” – Dairy, Flour, Salt and Sugar – as well as overly greasy or spicy foods, can help to manage the inflammation associated with Osteoarthritis.

Supplements

There are many helpful supplements that can be taken as both preventative self-care and to alleviate symptoms of Osteoarthritis, these include:

- Turmeric: Containing curcumin, a compound with strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. This can help reduce pain, inflammation and stiffness.
- Ginger: With powerful warming properties as well as anti-inflammatory effects, ginger can be invaluable in helping to alleviate pain and improve mobility in people with Osteoarthritis. It is extremely versatile and can be used as an addition to a foot bath, as a tea, or included in food preparation.

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- Green Tea Extract: Rich in antioxidants, green tea extract can reduce inflammation and may slow cartilage destruction.
- Du Zhong (Eucommia Bark): In Chinese Medicine, this supplement is known to strengthen bones and tendons, helpful for the lower back and leg pain, common symptoms of Osteoarthritis.
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Found in fish oil, these fatty acids have anti-inflammatory properties and can help to reduce joint swelling and pain.
- Medicinal Mushrooms: Reishi has powerful anti-inflammatory properties that can help to reduce joint pain and inflammation. Cordyceps will be helpful in improving energy levels and reducing fatigue. Shiitake is thought to have an alkalising effect on the body, which early research suggests may help to reduce uric acid crystals deposits in the joints.

Conclusion

In Chinese Medicine, Osteoarthritis is treated not only as a joint issue but as a holistic imbalance involving various organs and emotions. Managing this debilitating condition involves a combination of acupressure, dietary changes, supplements and Yang Sheng practices such as Qigong and meditation, all aimed at restoring the balance of Qi, nourishing the organs, and alleviating the pathogenic factors that cause joint pain.

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Want to know more?

We will be delighted to support you as you continue along your Yang Sheng journey.

The following will get you started:

'Yang Sheng: The Art of Chinese Self-Healing' available on Amazon, Waterstone and www.hayoumethod.com

Buy Yang Sheng Book

Healing Movement classes (3 x each week) and live meditations for a more in-depth and healing practice – full details [here](#)

Free Masterclass "[Master Your Health](#)" – understand the 3- step plan for preventative health. Find more Healing Masterclasses [here](#).

Free self-care weekly content [@katiebrindle](#) on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

Free regular gua sha demonstrations on [@thehayoumethod](#) Instagram & the opportunity to purchase the accompanying tools from www.hayoumethod.com

DISCLAIMER:

Please note that any of these Yang Sheng techniques are designed to support your overall self-care and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for any Western medical advice or treatment that you may be receiving. You should not use the information in this Guide or on our website for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease and must always consult your doctor if you have any health concerns. Additionally, please note that there are a few contraindications to Yang Sheng techniques, so please visit www.hayoumethod.com to view our comprehensive FAQs.

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