

Patient Help Sheet:

5 Ways to Quickly Alleviate Back Pain

A crisis is an opportunity riding the dangerous wind. – Chinese Proverb

Back pain is often what leads people to their first Acupuncture experience. It's one of the most frequent complaints heard by medical professionals in general. 80% of Americans will experience back pain at some point during their lives, and worldwide, back pain is the single leading cause of disability.¹

Standard modern day approaches to back pain include physical therapy, pain medication and even surgery when severe, depending on the diagnosis. Acupuncture (just one of the many tools of Chinese Medicine) is a very cost-effective pain-relief option with a low risk of negative side effects. For mild cases, Chinese Medicine offers some self-care tips to try at home.

REST & EXERCISE

Proper balance of yin and yang is the central tenet of TCM, and when it comes to back pain, either extreme can be a cause. We can develop painful stagnant energy in our bodies from a sedentary lifestyle (extreme yin). And we can deplete our yin with too much activity (extreme yang) leaving us susceptible to injury. Sometimes for mild back pain, all that's needed is a nap or a walk.



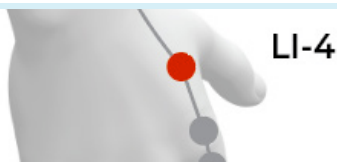
HOT & COLD

Another way to address the yin/yang balance needed for a strong, pain-free back is with applications of hot and cold. First we need to figure out if the problem is too yang (hot) or too yin (cold). Usually acute issues involve more hot inflammation (yang), in which case a cold pack (frozen peas, anyone?) can be soothing. Whereas with chronic conditions, heat is often more appropriate to open stagnant channels and encourage qi and blood flow for healing.



ACUPRESSURE

Certain points on the body help to open the channels of the low back to relieve pain and stagnation. LI 4 (Joining Valley) is located in the fleshy depression just beyond the meeting point of the thumb and first finger bones and strongly stimulates qi and blood flow throughout the body. UB40 (Supporting Middle) is at the midpoint of the crease behind the knee and opens up the main channel that runs along the back. Massage gently for any back pain.



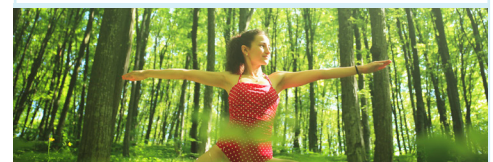
TOPICAL HERBS:

Tiger balm is a popular Chinese salve for topical pain relief, but another bathroom cabinet essential is Zheng Gu Shui (Evil Bone Water), an herbal liniment that can be applied directly to the skin of the low back to penetrate with blood moving, pain relieving qualities.



QI GONG

A basic qi gong stance with some breathing can start to move the stuck qi. Wu Ji posture is thought to help bring the body into proper alignment. With feet shoulder-width apart and relaxed knees, roll your pelvis in, drop the shoulders but spread them open, tuck the chin and imagine the top of the head being pulled upward. Breathe slow, smooth and deep, and empty your mind. Feel your connection to the earth through the soles of your feet.



Look up great (free!) instructional videos online that demonstrate specific qi gong exercises to support the lower back, such as 'Knocking on the Door of Life' and 'Spinal Chord Breathing'. Just this practice alone (if done regularly) can also completely change your response to stress, a major factor in pain perception.

These tips can go a long way in alleviating mild back pain, but be sure to book some acupuncture sessions to address root causes and give your body even stronger tools for rebalancing and pain relief.

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¹ <https://handsdownbetter.org/health-and-wellness/back-pain-facts-and-statistics/>