

Appendix 4

Chinese Medicine for Children

Questions and Answers for Parents

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1. What is Chinese Medicine?

Chinese medicine is a corpus of treatment methods that originated in China. Acupuncture, treatment based on the insertion of needles at certain points on the body, is the best known of these methods, although treatment based on herbs also enjoys wide use. In recent years, the *tui na* method of Chinese massage therapy has also been learned and employed in the West. Shiatsu is a massage technique based on the Chinese channels of energy (meridians) but was actually developed in Japan. The techniques of acupuncture and herbs are typically integrated, but a substantial number of practitioners work exclusively using one or the other.

2. What kinds of problems can be treated by Chinese Medicine?

Chinese Medicine can treat almost all systemic problems. The term “systemic” here refers to all problems involving multiple systems and levels of the body. Furthermore, as a holistic approach to medicine, Chinese Medicine does not simply treat visible symptoms but rather links the body’s different levels and strives to balance the body as a whole. Chinese Medicine is not as effective with mechanical problems, such as broken bones, torn ligaments, infected wounds, or acute conditions such as pneumonia. Western medicine’s symptomatic treatment is better suited for such cases.

3. Can every certified practitioner of Chinese medicine treat children?

Treatment of children is a specialty in itself and differs from treatment of adults. Those lacking experience working with children are strongly encouraged to seek the

assistance of a practitioner with practical experience in this area who can anticipate the reactions of children’s bodies, which differ dramatically from adult reactions to treatment. Practitioners also understand the importance of this point, and those who have not been trained to work with children typically refrain from doing so.

4. How old must a child be to undergo acupuncture?

Children can be treated at all ages. However, because acupuncture is systemic and affects all the physical and emotional systems of the body, and because children grow extremely rapidly up to the age of six months, it is preferable to refrain from using acupuncture to treat babies younger than half-a-year old. Babies under this age can be thought of as young sprouts, which also grow very quickly: during their phase of rapid growth, it is best to let them grow without intervening. However, in cases where Western medicine prescribes extreme medicinal or surgical treatment, practitioners may consider treating even younger children using acupuncture. For example, in the case of a blocked tear duct, Western medicine sometimes prescribes surgery, whereas Chinese medicine offers a treatment that is brief and simple. In such cases, practitioners are encouraged to treat children younger than the age of six months.

5. Is needle-based treatment painful?

Needle-based treatment is a technique that causes only slight pain. The major problem is the fear of parents, who are naturally wary of invasive treatments. The needles used in acupuncture are extremely fine – approximately fifteen times finer than the needles used

to draw blood or to administer vaccinations. The needles used for children are even finer, and are sharpened using lasers and partially coated with silicon to facilitate easy insertion

6. How many needles are used for treatment?

There are different approaches to acupuncture, and the number of needles used for treatment varies according to the method employed by the practitioner. Children are typically treated using a relatively small number of needles. The goal is to use the minimum necessary number of needles in order to achieve a precise, powerful effect.

7. How long are the needles left in the body?

In adults, needles are left in the body for twenty minutes. Acupuncture elicits a significantly more intense response in children, and for this reason the needles are inserted into the body for no more than between a few seconds or a few minutes, depending on the age of the child.

8. What is the frequency of treatment?

When treating ailments, the frequency of appointments should be once every two weeks. In the case of preventative treatment, patients can make due with quarterly treatments once every three months, in preparation for the change in seasons, or even once a year. Under extremely unusual circumstances, treatments are administered once or twice a week, but only in acute cases and only for a brief period of time.

9. Does acupuncture have side-effects?

In certain cases, treatment may be followed by an overreaction. This phenomenon is part of the treatment process and a manifestation of the body's struggle against the problem from which it is suffering. Overreaction lasts a maximum of three days and is anticipated ahead of time. Such exacerbation is common primarily with problems stemming from accumulation – whether energetic, as in the case of stress, or material, as in the case of phlegm. Such exacerbation frequently occurs after treatments using dispersion technique, which sends a signal to the body to rid itself of excess pathological energy by flushing it out. In such cases, the practitioner should inform the parents of the range of possible anticipated reactions and their respective chances of occurrence. Parents should also be instructed to inform and consult with the practitioner in the event of any unusual worsening of the patient's condition.

10. Can needle-based treatment cause injury?

If used improperly over time, any treatment technique can cause injury. However, because the technique of Chinese acupuncture is not based on substances but rather on stimulating the body and allowing the body to effect change, and because the human body by its very nature tends not to harm itself, the risk of damage is minimal. Acupuncture is safer than any medicinal treatment.

11. Can Chinese medicine treatments influence emotional conditions?

Chinese medicine is a holistic form of medicine, meaning that it addresses all levels of the person: the physical, the energetic, the emotional, and the psychological. According

to this approach, there is a direct connection between physical and emotional conditions. Today, practitioners of Western medicine are also aware of the close connection between emotional states and physical phenomena. In all cases, Chinese medicine relates to the emotional state of the patient and is therefore a good tool for achieving balance, even when the symptoms manifested are more emotional than physical.

12. Can acupuncture cure chronic illnesses?

Chinese medicine is capable of treating chronic illnesses, although the more chronic and severe the malady, the longer the duration of the treatment necessary to balance the body.

The body strives to survive at any cost. In order to balance the imbalance causing the illness, it creates an opposing system of balances. Therefore, balancing the body requires not only resolving the cause of the illness but balancing the body in its entirety. The more entrenched the opposing system of balances has become as part of the functioning of the body, the more time the process demands. As an illustrative example of this dynamic, consider a wart on the foot that goes untreated for an extended period and that has a detrimental impact on the person's posture. If the wart is removed soon after its appearance, the treatment will be short. If the wart does damage to the person's posture and is treated after a medium to long period of time, the muscles that have tightened due to the resulting imbalance will need time to adapt to the new situation. If the wart is removed after an extremely long period of incorrect posture that has caused disfiguration of the bones, removing the wart will not solve the problem. This

graphic example reflects the process the body undergoes in each case of imbalance. At first, the imbalance is manifested on an energetic level (tightening of muscles), and it then becomes material (disfiguration of the bones). The longer the person suffers from the problem, the more difficult the body is to balance. This is something that makes children easier to treat than adults: their problems are usually relatively new and have not yet had the chance to throw the body out of balance in a meaningful way, with the exception of problems stemming from family predisposition.

13. Is it worthwhile to come in for treatment when the child is sick?

If your child is being treated by Chinese medicine and comes down with an incidental illness that is unrelated to the primary complaint for which he is already being treated (such as diarrhea or fever), this is an important question to consider. Treating such incidental conditions can certainly be beneficial. On the other hand, children have a tendency to come down with minor illnesses, and the approach that supports allowing them to contend with it on their own also has merit. In any event, it is recommended in such cases to consult with the practitioner.

The use of herbs can provide first aid in cases when the parents observe the development of an ailment, but not to a degree that justifies intervention by a practitioner or a physician. Because children go out of balance and develop illnesses in relatively short periods of time, the quick response of parents is important. By maintaining a number of herbal formulas on hand at home, parents can provide themselves with an especially effective preventative treatment. The moment they identify the first signs of bodily

imbalance, they can immediately administer herbs and thereby prevent subsequent development of the condition. Other tools that can help children regain balance include dietary modification and massages.

14. Is Chinese medicine preventative medicine?

According to ancient Chinese medicine texts, “treating an illness is like digging a well when you are already thirsty.” It has also been said that “treating an illness is like sharpening swords after the battle has already begun.” These two proverbs clearly illustrate Chinese medicine’s approach to treatment. Proper treatment is preventative treatment: a healthy body must be balanced to prevent it from falling ill.

Chinese medicine is a good form of preventative medicine because it considers all the levels of the human body, and can therefore consider and make use of the links between them and thus better understand the state of the body as a whole. Conventional medicine deals only with problems that already exist, treating only the problem and not its root, which is sometimes located far deeper than the visible symptom.

Regular balancing treatments leading up to the changing of the seasons is highly recommended. During these transitional periods, the climate is changing and we, who protect our bodies from the climatic conditions (with air-conditioners and heaters), find it difficult to adapt to the change going on around us. Chinese medicine addresses the change in climate and the energetic impact it has on us and helps the body make the change as smooth as possible.

15. What is the fundamental difference between Chinese and Western medicine?

Part of the answer to this question can be found in the answer to the above question: “Is Chinese medicine preventative medicine?” To put it concisely, the difference between the two systems stems from the differences between two different worldviews. The Western worldview is linear, logical, and mathematical. The Eastern worldview is circular and cyclical.

In Western medicine, all that exists is the logical and the scientific. Western medicine deals with problems only if they are scientifically proven and if there is a symptom that can be clearly defined. The Chinese approach is holistic, meaning that it addresses all levels of the human being – physical, emotional, and mental – and strives to understand imbalances on an a comprehensive level.

From a medical perspective, the Western conception views the cell as the most important unit and understands the body as an amalgamation of cells or a complex of parts working together, with an emphasis on the parts instead of the whole. The Chinese conception regards the person as a mold of nature. We are part of nature and subject to the rules of nature. Observing nature, then, enables us to learn the rules and to apply them to the person as a complete system, not as a complex of parts.

This analysis should not be understood as meaning that one of the conceptions is better than the other. The fact that the Chinese conception is abstract makes it difficult for the Western conception to understand. As practitioners and parents,

we must be familiar with both methods and with the advantages and disadvantages of each one, and know how to combine the two as effectively as possible.

16. How can we achieve the right balance between Western and Chinese medicine?

We live in an era of exceptional openness in which the separation between different medical techniques is artificial. We must therefore make use of all suitable methods of treatment and remain cognizant of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

One of the advantages offered by Western medicine is its ability to deal with acute conditions. When we are suffering from a serious ailment that could result in irreparable damage or death, it is critical to first treat the symptom, which is the strong point of Western medicine. Another major advantage of Western medicine is its broad diagnostic capacity, from blood tests to imaging to different kinds of X-rays and photographs.

The advantage of Chinese medicine is its comprehensive treatment of all parts of the human being and its ability to balance and treat the root of the problem and not just its symptom. On this basis, in non-acute conditions, it is recommended to follow the following procedure:

1. Diagnose the problem using Western medicine.
2. Attempt to treat it using a natural approach that views the entire complex and that does not focus only on the visible problem.
3. If the problem cannot be treated naturally, then return to Western medicine for treatment.

17. Why is Western medicine unable to accept Chinese medicine?

Chinese medicine is still not accepted by large parts of the scientific community due to Chinese medicine's difficulty complying with the research standards of the Western world. These standards are based on statistics, which require assembling a large group of people suffering from an ailment of some kind, treating some of them, and leaving a control group to suffer from the same ailment without treatment. The ability to prove quantitatively, using Western tools, that a high percentage of the patients in the group receiving treatment experienced an improvement in their condition in contrast to the group that did not receive treatment is considered scientific evidence. The problem is that acupuncture is personal and is not limited to the treatment of a problem. For this reason, it is impossible in Chinese medicine to administer the same exact treatment to a large group of people suffering from the same problem. According to the Chinese conception, although all the people in the group are indeed suffering from the same problem, the cause of the problem in each one is unique, and each patient must therefore receive a different treatment.

In addition to this obstacle, there are no funding sources for studies that prove the effectiveness of acupuncture, because such studies offer no prospects of economic gain.

However, despite the difficulties involved with presenting Chinese medicine using research models, many studies have indeed shown that acupuncture has an effect on the body and that there is

substance to Chinese medicine. In recent years, the medical establishment has started to accept Chinese medicine as a method of treatment in its own right. Many physicians believe in its value as a method and even refer some of their patients for treatment by Chinese medicine.

18. What is the effect of antibiotics according to Chinese medicine?

Antibiotics are an important type of medicine that is responsible for saving many lives every second of every day. Under some circumstances, people simply need to take antibiotics, and it is a mistake to rule out antibiotic-use in general. However, frequent and unnecessary use of this powerful medicine can be problematic.

In the conceptual world of Chinese medicine, excess activity of a bodily system is understood as heat, and inadequate activity is referred to as cold. Whereas conventional medicine refers to states of excess bacterial activity as infections, Chinese medicine describes them as heat. In such states, it is necessary to cool the body. This can be achieved using acupuncture or herbs, and the use of antibiotics may be weighed if necessary. As antibiotics treat states of infection, Chinese medicine regards them as cooling in nature.

The cooling effect of antibiotics is extremely powerful, and their repeated use can produce a state of over-cooling. In children, this can result from just one use. Chinese medicine defines this state as one of “internal cold.” To contend with and balance this internal cold, the body responds with excess heating, resulting once again in the development of infection, as infection is a state of heat. The Western response at this point is, once

again, to prescribe antibiotics, and so on and so forth, with a steadily increasing level of cold and a steadily decreasing period of time between infections. Many parents of children suffering from ear infections experience this process, which sometimes concludes with preventative antibiotic use, or the preventative energetically cooling of the body to prevent the development of infection.

Treatment using Chinese medicine enables the body to eject both excess heat and excess cold and in so doing enables it to regain balance.

19. What is treatment of a parent for the benefit of the child?

Children are extremely sensitive to their surroundings. When someone close to the child is suffering from an imbalance of some kind, particularly an emotional imbalance, the child may reflect the hardship of that person and even intensify it. One example of this dynamic is the case of the parent who is in conflict with her supervisor at work and is therefore under a high level of pressure and stress. Although she may not show this overtly, the child feels and identifies with the stress, has trouble falling asleep, and starts to wake up in the middle of the night. Another example is the child who exhibits signs of anxiety in response to his father’s anxiety about him. Treating the child can help, but the child’s anxiety is likely to return because its cause is still active. In such cases, joint parent-child treatment can help them achieve balance vis-à-vis one another. This does not mean that the parent is becoming a regular patient. Rather, it is a brief attempt to achieve balance between the parent and the child. Such treatments have proven to be quite effective.