

SHULAN CLINIC – ACUPUNCTURE • CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE

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Acne & TCM - by Prof. Shulan Tang

Most of us suffer from acne at some point in our lives. For some it is very mild and hardly noticed, but for other it can be more serious and quite distressing. What are the causes of this condition and how does TCM handle it?

What is Acne?



(Shulan Patent Herbal Medicines)

Acne is a skin disorder which results in spots, whiteheads, blackheads and in the more serious forms, cysts and abscesses, which can leave disfigured pitted scars when they heal. In more severe cases the eruptions can feel sore or itchy. Acne is commonly seen on the face, back and chest.

Most adolescent boys and girls suffer from acne at some point but most grow out of it. However, some people can suffer from acne into their late thirties, sometimes even into their forties. In girls, acne can get worse before periods.

Acne is not dangerous, but it is unsightly, and therefore distressing to the sufferer. Although mild acne normally disappears in the early twenties, more severe acne may leave permanently raised or pitted scars, which may additionally result in psychological damage to sensitive teenagers.

Treatment of Acne

Internal treatment

According to the different types of acne, individual treatment principles are made and suitable herbal prescriptions are achieved.

1) Wind-Heat affecting the lung channel.

Treatment principle

To expel wind and clear away heat in the lung channel.

Prescription

Modification of Pi Pa Qin Fei Yin - Herbs: Pi Pa Gao, Gan Cao, Sang Bai Pi and Huang Qin etc.

2) Damp-Heat in the Spleen and Stomach.

Treatment principle

Clear away heat and eliminate dampness.

Prescription

Modification of Che Qian Shen Shi Tang - Herbs: Che Qian Cao, Mu Dan Pi, Yin Chen Hao and Ku Shen etc.

3) Disharmony of Chong & Ren channels.

Treatment principle

To regulate the Chong and Ren channels. Soothe the Liver and ease the effects of stress.

Prescription

Modification of Xiao Yao San - Herbs: Mu Dan Pi, Dang Gui, Bai Shao, Yi Mu Cao, Chai Hu etc.

All of the above herbal prescriptions are available in loose herbs for decoction, concentrated powders and in capsule and pill form. The most effective herbal pills are *Jin Ju Di Dan Wan* and *Xia Zhi Qing Dai Wan*.

External Treatment

1) Detoxifying herbs for external wash: Bai Hua She She Cao, Ku Shen, Huang Bai and Zhi Zi.

2) Herbal gel for washing greasy skin on the face: Liu Wu Xie Ye.

What causes Acne?

At puberty, the raised levels of hormones increase glandular secretions of the oily substance sebum. Also, excessive bacteria on the skin, high humidity and eating too much chocolate and greasy foods are all causes of acne.

Traditional Chinese Medicine classifies acne into three different types:

1) Wind-Heat affecting the lung channel.

Wind heat in the lung can stimulate the skin and cause acne.

Main Symptoms & Signs

There are red papules and tubercles with inflammatory infiltration around them, accompanied by a burning sensation, red tip of the tongue with thin yellow fur and slippery rapid pulse.

2) Damp-Heat in the Spleen and Stomach.

Main Symptoms & Signs

Indurative acne and cystic acne which are mainly characterised by skin lesions, yellow and greasy fur coating on the tongue and soft rapid pulse.

3) Disharmony of Chong & Ren channels.

Main Symptoms & Signs

This type of acne changes according to the menstruation cycle. It is usually worse before menstruation, accompanied by irregular periods or period pain. The tongue is dark red with yellow coating. The pulse is taut, thready and rapid.