

How Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) **Acupuncture treat facial paralysis?**

Facial paralysis from the Western medical perspective

Facial paralysis occurs when facial nerves are injured. As a result, this intervenes with the signals between the brain and facial muscles. The affected muscles are often associated with movements on the face, which includes smiling, blinking and other facial movements. It may affect the muscles on one or both sides of the face. People with facial paralysis may experience problems with displaying their expressions of feelings on their face. They may not be able to close their eye on the affected side. Patients may experience having a high temperature, a stiff neck, feeling of stiffness on one or both sides of their face. They may also feel pain at the back of their ear. The causes of facial paralysis are still a mystery to be solved by scientists. However, scientists believe it may be caused by bacteria, viruses, the malfunction of the immune system and others like trauma, head injury or nerve injury.

The most common type of facial paralysis is Bell's Palsy, which is found in 80% of the cases. According to the NHS (National Health Service), patients with Bell's Palsy can be treated by taking a ten-day course of steroid medicine and advice from practitioners on different ways of looking after the affected eye. Some patients may be prescribed prednisolone. But it is important that the prescribed course needs to begin within three days (72 hours) once symptoms first appear. People with Bell's Palsy usually recover within six to nine months. However, some are left with permanent facial paralysis.

There are also other types of facial paralysis, such as Ramsay Hunt Syndrome and Lyme Disease. Ramsay Hunt Syndrome is a more severe type of facial paralysis and it is caused by viruses in the facial nerves. As well as facial weakness, patients with Ramsay Hunt Syndrome will often have blisters in their ears and on the roof of their mouth. Patients are often treated with steroids, antiviral medications, advice on eye care and face care treatments. As for Lyme Disease, it is a bacterial infection that can cause facial paralysis. Individuals are often infected by being bitten by an infected tick. Treatments for this disease include antibiotics and eye care treatments. For more information about these different types of facial paralysis, please visit the NHS website.

It is important that facial paralysis is not mistaken for signs of stroke. Stroke tends to come suddenly. Somebody with stroke may have the following symptoms: face droops on one side (including the eye and mouth), difficulties lifting the arm and keeping it in place. They may also have difficulties speaking.

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Facial paralysis from the Chinese medical perspective

Facial paralysis (also known as 'deviated mouth') in Traditional Chinese Medicine is often associated with wind invasion in the body.

What is wind in TCM?

Wind comes from the outside air. When it enters our body, it can fill our body with humidity and dryness. This can lead to heat developing in our body, causing us to feel unwell and develop symptoms like fever, cold, cough, sore throat and hyperthermia. Wind can prevent Qi from protecting our body, therefore foreign pathogens can easily enter our body. It can attack our body very quickly with its fast movements and irregular patterns. It can enter different parts of our body very easily. When trapped wind is present in our body, it can cause us to feel dizzy and have muscle spasms, pain in our joints, stiff neck or facial paralysis.

Wind travels upwards in nature. When it invades our body, it will often affect the upper parts of our body, such as the face. Facial paralysis is often caused by foreign pathogens blocking the essential channels in the body. It can prevent the facial nerves from functioning properly. As wind causes Qi deficiency, the meridian associated with the face is not clear, causing a lot of difficulties for blood and oxygen to fill the area of the face with the nourishments it needs.

How acupuncture can help?



Acupuncturists often will often use electro-acupuncture to treat patients with facial paralysis. Electro-acupuncture can help to stimulate the muscle and the nerves in the paralysed area. Acupuncture needles will be inserted into certain points on the face.

Acupuncture can help to restore Qi and remove the trapped wind in the body. This will help to promote blood circulation around the body, bringing essential nutrients to the face. In addition, our immune system will be protected by Qi, which will help our body to fight off foreign pathogens.

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