

Acu News

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

7 BACK HURTING HABITS



When acupuncturists treat back pain in Chinese Medicine we often focus on 2 aspects of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM): the Kidney system and the concept of 'qi (energy) & Blood Stagnation'. The low back is the 'mansion of the kidneys' and relies on good stores of kidney qi for proper function while qi & blood stagnation is a major contributor to low back pain. Qi and blood stagnation can be due to external factors such as pathogens or trauma, or internal weakness of qi and blood flow related to diet and lifestyle. Many of the bad habits we develop that can induce back pain are repeated poor choices in our everyday lives that cause qi and blood stagnation and/or tax our kidney system. Let's look at some of the common problem areas:

SLEEP: We spend about one-third of our lives sleeping so it makes sense that how we sleep is going to have a huge impact on how we feel in our bodies. A major factor that can make or break our backs is our sleep position. The idea is to keep the spine in alignment by sleeping on your back or using a pillow between your legs. Sleeping on the wrong mattress is another common mistake. Finding the right one can be a challenge as there isn't one type of mattress that's best for everyone. The best mattress to keep your spine aligned depends on your body type, hip size etc., so shop around! The right mattress and sleeping position is crucial in keeping proper qi and blood flow in the body.

SITTING: Let's face it, modern day life has most of us sitting more than ever in history. Whether we are at a computer, commuting, or just sitting for long periods of time, the mechanics of too much sitting can increase muscle stiffness and put pressure on the discs of the spine. Simple standing stretches or short walks to break up these routines can get that qi and blood moving again and prevent further stagnation in the lower back.

POSTURE: Even if we aren't living a sedentary lifestyle and are standing and moving more, we need to pay attention to our posture. For many of us, slouching is one of the hardest habits to break. It takes constant awareness to reset a hunched position to one with our shoulders back, chest lifted and our center of gravity stabilized. It's a worthwhile effort though as it opens up our breathing, delivers oxygen to our cells and allows for a rejuvenating flow of qi and blood.

LIFTING heavy items: We've all heard the expression: "Lift with the knees, not with the back", but when in a rush many of us make the near fatal mistake of bending at the waist to lift a heavy item and end up putting tremendous pressure on the lower spine and back muscles. Remember to pause, get help when needed, or use tools if necessary. Slow down and practice martial artist-like awareness when your body needs to maneuver with strength and stability.

SHOES: If your feet hurt at the end of the day, you should take a look at your shoes. Are they really supporting your feet? Do they fit right? You may even want to consider orthopedic shoes depending on your foot shape and how 'on your feet' you are from day to day. If our feet are not positioned right it can cause the hip and lower back to become misaligned.

Another reason this is important is because the kidney channel begins at the bottom of the foot and travels up the legs. We need to make sure that energy in that channel is not impeded as it is a direct source of low back support.

NUTRITION: Bad nutritional habits that can directly affect our low backs include eating kidney depleting foods such as overly salted processed snacks and not drinking enough water. Overeating is another bad habit that can tax not just the kidney qi, but all organ systems and affect back muscles by pulling weight forward.

For additional assistance in changing unhealthy behaviors, moving qi and blood stagnation and supporting your kidneys for back pain relief and better overall health, get in for some re-balancing acupuncture treatments!

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