



CLINICAL CORNER

3-Point Prescriptions for Stomach Pain

Acute and chronic stomach discomfort are extremely common in the acupuncture clinic. Fortunately, there are highly effective three-point acupuncture prescriptions that can be easily modified for both acute and chronic gastrointestinal issues manifesting in a variety of pattern presentations.

While the focus in this installment is on gastrointestinal issues such as nausea, bloating and acid reflux, both acute and chronic in nature, overall gastrointestinal health and its relation to larger contemporary concepts such as the microbiome has important implications for the role of acupuncture in gastrointestinal disease in all its varied expressions.

Acute Stomach Pain: *Ren 10 + Ren 12 + St 34*

This three-point acupuncture prescription is highly effective for acute gastrointestinal issues such as stomach pain, nausea, acid reflux and diarrhea. *Ren 10* is the meeting point of the conception vessel with the spleen channel, and has the actions of harmonizing the stomach, regulating *qi* and dispelling food stagnation.



Ren 12 is the front *mu* point of the stomach / meeting point of the conception vessel with the small intestine, *sanjiao* and stomach channels; it harmonizes the middle *jiao*, descends rebellious *qi*, tonifies the stomach / spleen, regulates *qi*, and stops pain.

St 34 is the *xi*-cleft point of the stomach channel, with actions including activating the stomach channel, harmonizing the stomach, moderating acute conditions, and alleviating pain.

The overall combination of actions of this three-point prescription is ideal for patients suffering from acute and chronic issues that may manifest with periodic episodes of more severe symptomology.

Due to the acute nature of gastrointestinal pain, the presentation of the tongue may be normal or reflect chronic underlying patterns; while the pulse is often more representative of the acute challenges and could be wiry / rapid, slippery / rapid with heat-excess patterns or slow / deep in cold-deficient patterns.

In patients suffering from acute gastrointestinal symptoms with underlying spleen deficiency, the three-point prescription can be modified in the following manner: *Ren 12* + *St 34* + *Sp 9*.

Sp 9 is the *he-sea* and water point of the spleen channel, having the actions of regulating the spleen, resolving dampness, opening / moving the water passages, and benefiting the lower *jiao*. While *Sp 9* is often focused exclusively on the lower gastrointestinal tract, this point is also highly effective for upper gastrointestinal issues as well.

Chronic Stomach Issues: *Ren 10* + *Ren 12* + *Sp 3* and *BL 20* + *BL 21* + *DU 6*

Acute gastrointestinal issues are often the most common issues seen in the acupuncture clinic, and such recalcitrant issues often manifest in acute episodes of pain and discomfort. Chronic gastrointestinal issues almost always have underlying deficiency issues of the spleen / kidneys;

therefore, in such cases, I use two separate three-point acupuncture formulas: one for the front and one for the back.

Front three-point prescription: Ren 10 + Ren 12 + Sp 3: This three-point prescription adds the *shu*-stream / *yuan* source / earth point, Sp 3, which tonifies the spleen, resolves dampness, clears damp heat, harmonizes the spleen / stomach, and regulates *qi*. This addition to the *Ren 10 / Ren 12* actions makes this three-point prescription highly effective for chronic gastrointestinal issues, which often manifest as acute flareups.

Back three-point prescription: BL 20 + BL 21 + Du 6: This three-point prescription can be administered first and the front point prescription can be administered second. BL 20 is the back *shu* point of the spleen, having the actions of tonifying the spleen, resolving dampness, raising the spleen *qi*, and regulating the *qi* of the middle *jiao*. BL 21 is the back *shu* point of the stomach; its actions include regulating the stomach, descending rebellious *qi* and harmonizing the middle *jiao*. *Du 6* has the actions of fortifying the spleen, draining damp and benefiting the spine.

When this back three-point prescription is used in conjunction with the front three-point prescription, both underlying deficiencies and acute flareups can be targeted. In cases of chronic gastrointestinal issues, the tongue presentations can typically range from pale / red, to swollen with teeth marks, dry with cracks in the stomach area, and potentially swollen sides in the liver area. Pulse presentations can range from wiry to slippery, fast to slow, depending upon the unique pattern presentations of mixed chronic / acute issues.

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