

The Three Treasures of the Face

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The dual quest for longevity and beauty began some 5,000 years ago with the Chinese. It was said that the great Emperor Shih-Huang-ti of the imperial Ch'in dynasty was on an unending quest to defy death when faced with the truth of his own mortality. During his reign, messengers and troops were dispatched to faraway lands in search of the elixir for eternal life, and court physicians were constantly commissioned to search for solutions.

There are accounts from Chinese physicians of 221 B.C. who practiced what we would call dermatology, in conjunction with other disciplines. In texts that have survived from this era, such as the *Nei Jing* and *Shan Han Lun*, the practitioner is directed to synergize the following five protocols so as to preserve beauty and enhance the length of life: herbal therapies, diet, *tuina* massage, *qigong* and acupuncture.

Because acupuncture nurtured the quality of life, energy and creativity, acupuncture that focused on the face was not seen as separate from that which addressed the well-being of the entire body. Facial acupuncture has always been principally intended to address constitutional imbalances. In China, the ancients believed in fostering longevity through an emphasis on rest, exercise, diet, herbs, good elimination, sufficient fluids and a general balance of body/mind/spirit.

Beauty From the Perspective of Oriental Medicine

Chinese medicine presents us with a model that, at its core, combines art and science. As such, it can incorporate music and poetry. In keeping with this idea, it comes as no surprise to find references to beauty in one of the ancient texts, a book of odes (poems), which was compiled during the Bronze Age, circa 600 B.C.

These books were structured in a Q&A format, in which the empress would ask the physician how to maintain her beauty. In this particular example, when the physician is asked to describe a beautiful face, his response is "clear." A beautiful face is clear.

Therefore, if a particular face doesn't exhibit this clarity, it is not beautiful. Finally, of course, the *shen*, or spirit, is a combination of the color, radiance and expression of the face. All of these qualities comprise the ancient Chinese definition of beauty.

What Is It?

Constitutional facial acupuncture renewal is a safe, painless and effective treatment for renewing the face, as well as the whole body. Fine lines may be entirely erased, deeper lines reduced, and bags around the neck and eyes firmed.

Fine needles are placed at a variety of acupuncture points on the face, neck and around the eyes to stimulate the body's natural energies or *qi*. Since muscle groups are addressed, as well as the acupuncture points, the face lifts itself via the muscles' toning and tightening action. The needles also stimulate blood circulation, which improves facial color.

Benefits

Constitutional:

- Improves acne (caused by hormonal imbalance).
- Helps menopause, perimenopause, PMS and other gynecologic issues.
- Helps sinus congestion.
- Improves hyper- and hypothyroidism.
- Reduces symptoms of toothache, TMJ, trigeminal neuralgia and Bell's palsy.
- Helps headaches (except severe migraines).
- Treats diarrhea and constipation, and most digestive issues.
- Helps to eliminate edema and puffiness.
- Benefits eyes, ears and brain.
- Can help insomnia and dizziness.
- Helps depression and self-esteem.

Facial:

- Improves collagen production and muscle tone.
- Helps reduce bags and sagging tendencies.
- Helps eliminate fine lines and diminish larger wrinkles.
- Helps reduce double chin and lifts drooping eyelids.
- Improves metabolism.
- Tightens pores and brightens eyes.
- Increases local blood and lymph circulation.
- Improves facial color.
- Reduces stress and promotes total health and well-being.

Reversing Aging: Nourishing the Three Treasures

The *Nei Jing* recommends that in order to preserve a "clear" face, promote beauty and enhance longevity, it is necessary to address the Three Treasures - *jing*, *qi* and *shen* - throughout the entire time of treatment.

Jing (hereditary essence):

In constitutional facial acupuncture renewal, the practitioner always treats the body first, addressing the patient's individual constitutional landscape. The first level of this aspect of the patient's makeup is the *jing*, or ancestral energy. *Jing* is reflected in our genetic inheritance and manifests itself in the bone structure of the face and body.

The more prominent this component, the more *jing* and potential is available to them. In this initial phase of treatment, we support the *jing* by employing the eight extraordinary meridians (energy pathways), which run deep within the body. We are therefore able to tap into and nourish the DNA/RNA of the individual cells.

Qi (energy):

The next structural component is the *qi*, which manifests most visibly in the changing nature of the skin during the aging process. Acupuncture points and meridians are used on the face and body to treat puffy, sagging, dry, cracked or wrinkled flesh. Imbalances are addressed by supporting the *qi*, which brings fresh blood and color to the face by enhancing circulation and fluid metabolism.

Shen (spirit):

Shen is the light that shines forth from someone's eyes when they are connected to their heart energy, or compassion. It is the clarity and radiance manifested in the face when the emotions are balanced. As a component of physical beauty, it creates the impression of joy and well-being.

Is Facial Acupuncture for Everyone?

For most prospective clients, it is safe and beneficial, not only for preventing wrinkles, but also for reversing the customary signs of aging. It would probably be more instructive to list the few contraindications for facial acupuncture.

Contraindications:

- Severe high blood pressure (It is OK when the blood pressure is under control and the patient is seeing a medical doctor.)
- Severe migraines (If the patient is having a migraine only once every three months or so, they can receive facial acupuncture treatments.)
- Be aware that it takes a patient three weeks to recover from laser resurfacing of the face. Do not needle during that time. Wait a week after microdermabrasion before needling.

(Also, do not perform acupuncture during pregnancy, colds/flu, acute herpes outbreak or acute allergic reactions. In the latter three cases, the patient may receive facial acupuncture once the condition has passed.)

How Long Is the Treatment?

Constitutional facial acupuncture involves the patient in an organic process in which a series of treatments are necessary to achieve maximal effect. After an initial session, the practitioner evaluates the patient's response and then can determine the number of follow-up visits required.

After this evaluation and consideration of variables such as stress, diet, lifestyle, genetic inheritance, proper digestion and elimination, sleep, emotional balance and age, the following treatments are usually recommended: 12 to 15 treatments or 20 treatments for smokers or people whose skin tends to sag (i.e., jowls, "turkey wattles," droopy eyes, etc.). The treatments should be two times a week for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or one 90-minute treatment per week.

It should be noted that age is not as crucial as might be expected. An older patient with a healthy lifestyle may have a better prognosis than a younger person who is prone to dissipate themselves.

Maintenance Treatments

Within the normal parameters of aging, the completion of a series of treatments should be effective. To sustain results, ongoing booster treatments are recommended, including every two weeks for two

months; then once a month for an indefinite amount of time. Of course, the patient also can have a subsequent treatment series after a week's respite.

The Use of Chinese Herbs

The constitutional facial acupuncture treatment protocol incorporates Chinese herbal masks, poultices and moisturizers. Jade rollers that enhance blood circulation, remove fine lines and age spots, and prevent premature aging also are used to massage moisturizer into the skin. The ancient empresses of China wore jade not only around their necks, but also to attract *yin* and nourishment into their skin. The stone served a double purpose of promoting beauty and magical protection.

Short- and Long-Term Effects

After the first treatment, one will usually observe an increased glow to the complexion - the result of increased *qi* and blood flow to the face. The person's face appears more "open," along with clarity in the eyes ("clear *shen*"). The patient appears to be more rested, wrinkles start to lessen and the skin appears more toned.

A significant difference in appearance can be seen following the fifth to seventh treatment - even more changes in wrinkles, skin tone, etc. The impression of relaxation and calm is more pronounced. Lifting of the jowls, neck and the eyes has begun and is usually noticeable. With continuing treatment, constitutional issues like digestive complaints have been ameliorated or have subsided.

By the end of a series, the patient should look and feel five to 15 years younger. These results may vary slightly, depending upon how well the patient has taken care of themselves during the process and afterward. At this stage, maintenance treatments provide ongoing support within a normal process of aging.

Constitutional facial acupuncture is noninvasive, less costly than surgical procedures and draws upon the ancient Chinese wisdom related to longevity, beauty and balance.

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