

Skin Itching Syndrome Treatment with Acupuncture and Chinese Herbs Medicine

By Dr. Liu, Hongwei & Dr. Yang, Xiujuan Ph.D.; L.Ac.; M.D. (China)

Skin Itching is a common problem in acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine clinic. Itches can be localized (limited to one area of the body) or generalized (in which itching occurs all over the body or in several different areas). Generalized itch, for obvious reasons, is more difficult to treat by western medication, but very effective with acupuncture and herbal treatment. Itches can also occur with or without skin lesions (e.g., bumps or blisters). Skin itching might be caused by dermatitis, eczema, acne, scabies, psoriasis, hay weaves, urticaria.

Itching accompanies many conditions. Probably the most common cause of itch is psychological, that is, due to stress, anxiety, etc. Stress also can aggravate itch from other causes. Dry skin is another frequent cause of itch. Other causes include metabolic and endocrine disorders (e.g., liver or kidney disease, hyperthyroidism), cancers (e.g., lymphoma), reactions to drugs, infestations of the skin (e.g., body lice), and diseases of the blood (e.g., polycythemia vera). Most people, who itch, however, do not have a serious underlying condition.

Itching usually prompts scratching, which can sometimes lead to a vicious itch-scratch cycle. Scratching can initially feel so satisfying - but prolonged scratching just leaves you with irritated skin that can still itch! Since scratching provides only temporary relief and doesn't promote healing of the underlying problem, it is best to avoid scratching if at all possible. If scratching breaks open the skin, bacterial infection can set in. And if scratching continues for many months or years, the area that is scratched may develop thickened skin (lichenification) or pigmentation that darkens the area.

The followings are acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine treatment methods.

I. Wind-Heat syndrome:

Clinical manifestation: The generalized skin itching in summer is usually caused by excessive heat and it may be worse after sweating. The violent scratching may cause oozing of blood and formation of crusts and the patients may suffer from annoyance, thirst and insomnia. Red tongue with thin yellow coating, the pulse is slippery and rapid.

Treatment principle: Clear heat, cooling blood, eliminate wind and stop itching.

Acupuncture points: LI11, LI4, SJ5, GB20, and SP10.

Formula: Xiao feng san and Yin qiao san Modification.

Herbs: Such as Fang feng, Chan tui, Zhi mu, Niu bang zi, Jing jie, Lian qiao, Dan zhu ye, Chi shao yao, Mu dan pi, She chuang zi, Bai xian pi, Zi cao, Sang ye, Wu shao she.

Chinese Traditional Medicine in New York and Long Island at our Clinics: New York Metropolitan Area's Source for Acupuncture and Chinese Herbology

II. Wind-Cold invasion:

Clinical manifestation: This syndrome usually occurs with yang deficiency patients and appears in autumn and winter seasons. The generalized itching may be aggravated by cool wind when taking off clothes for going to bed at night or when putting on clothes in the morning. And the itching can be alleviated by warmth, such as sleeping with heavy bedclothes. Pale tongue with white coating, the pulse is deep, weak, and thin.

Treatment principle: Tonify qi and blood, Harmonize ying & wei, and stop itching.

Acupuncture points: LI4, GB20, LI11, Tai yang, DU14, UB11, UB12, and UB13

Formula: Si wu tang, Gai zhi ma huang ge ban tang, Yu ping feng san modification.

Herbs: Such as Ma huang, gui zhi, Bai shao yao, Dang gui, Fu ling, Huang qi, Fang feng, Bai zhu, Gan cao, Sheng jiang, Da zao.

III: Damp-Heat accumulation:

Clinical manifestation: This pattern of the patients often has the skin lesion at any part of the body surface may appear the erythema, maculopapules, papules, papulovesicles, erosion and exudation in succession, and some of them may appear simultaneously. The patients may suffer from severe itching, heavy sensation of the body, foggy, fever, thirst, poor appetite, fullness sensation of the abdomen, bitter taste or dryness in the mouth, dry stool and yellow and dark urine. The tongue is red with thin yellow sticky coating, and wiry, slippery pulse.

Treatment principle: Clear heat, reducing toxicity, drain dampness and stop itching.

Acupuncture points: LI4, GB41, GB34, SP9, SP6, and LI11.

Formula: Bei xie feng qing yin, Huang qin hua shi tang modification.

Herbs: Such as Bei xie, Huang bai, Shi chang pu, Fu ling, Dan shen, Hua shi, Huang qin, Zhu ling, Che qian zi, Yi yi ren, Zhi ke, Bai xian pi, Di fu zi, Pu gong ying.

IV. Blood deficiency with hyperactivity of the Liver yang:

Clinical manifestation: This syndrome usually occurs in aged people, chronic condition, and worse with emotional change. Combined with dry skin, irritability, insomnia, dream-disturbed sleep, headache, tinnitus, dry mouth or bitter taste in the mouth, constipation, low back pain and weakness of the knee, yellow and dark urine. Red tongue with thin coating or no coating, the pulse is thin or wiry thin, or wiry thin and rapid.

Treatment principle: Nourishes the blood, moderate the Liver, moisten dryness and stop itching.

Acupuncture points: LI4, Liv3, Liv8, SP10, PC6, and UB17.

Formula: Qi bao mei ran dan, Zhen gan xi feng tang, Long dan xie gan tang modification.

Herbs: Such as He shou wu, Fu ling, Huai niu xi, Gou qi zi, Dang gui, Tian men dong, Sheng long gu, Sheng mu li, Bai shao yao, Huang jing, Long dan cao, Zhi zi, Huang qin, Shi jue ming, Chuan lian zi, Xuan shen, Bai xian pi, Di fu zi, Mu dan pi.

Chinese Traditional Medicine in New York and Long Island at our Clinics: New York Metropolitan Area's Source for Acupuncture and Chinese Herbology

V. The skin poor Nourishment:

Clinical manifestation: This syndrome is usually found in weak or aged patients with generalized itching, worse at night and fornicating in nature. The skin is dry, thickened and scattered with scratching marks. The disease often lingers for a long time and the patients may suffer from pale complexion, mental fatigue, palpitation, insomnia forgetfulness, and poor appetite, spontaneous sweating, lover greed fever. Pale tongue with white coating, the pulse is thin, deep and weak.

Treatment principle: Tonify qi and Nourish blood, moisten dryness and stop itching.

Acupuncture points: SP10, Liv8, UB17, ST 36, and SP 6.

Formula: Ren shen yang rong tang modification.

Herbs: Such as Bai shao yao, Dang gui, Huang qi, Dang shen, Sheng di huang, Yuan zhi, He shou wu, Wu wei zi, Da zao, Bai xian pi, Di fu zi.

VI. Blood stagnation:

Clinical manifestation: This syndrome is usually for a long time. The itching may persist for a long time and it is more severe at the place with skin under constant pressure. After repeated scratching, the skin may become thick and scattered with scratching marks and purplish brown stripes. The face and lips are dull and dark. The mouth is dry, but without desire to drink water. The tongue is dark and scattered with ecchymosis and the coating is scanty. The pulse is deep and uneven or choppy.

Treatment principle: invigorate the blood, eliminate blood stasis, disperse wind and stop itching.

Acupuncture points: UB17, UB18, UB40, LI4, SP6, and SP10.

Formula: Tao hong si wu tang modification.

Herbs: Such as Dang gui wei, Chi shao yao, Tao ren, Hong hua, Chuan xiong, Jing jie, Chan tui, Bai ji li, Ji xue teng, San leng, E zhu, Gan cao.