



Wellbeing Clinic Newsletter

Today's Focus:

SCOLIOSIS

For anyone who knows us it will not be a surprise to say that we are undeniable experts in treating back problems. But can Traditional Chinese Medicine help with Scoliosis?

What is Scoliosis?

Scoliosis is an abnormal curvature of the spine, where the spine twists and curves to one side. The condition may affect people of any age although it mostly starts in children aged 10 to 15. Symptoms of Scoliosis include:

- a visibly curved spine leaning to one side
- uneven shoulders
- one of the shoulders or hips sticking out, ribs sticking out on one side
- back pain in some cases

Conventional medical treatments available for Scoliosis

If you consult the NHS guidance on Scoliosis you will discover that Scoliosis *"is not a sign of anything serious and treatment is not always needed if it's mild"*.

Since it is considered that most people with Scoliosis can lead "normal lives", do "most activities" and the condition "does not usually cause significant pain or other health problems and tends to stay the same after you stop growing" no treatment is offered in most cases.

Treatments available include, depending on the age of the patient:

- plaster cast or plastic brace to stop the curve getting worse (babies and toddlers);
- back brace to stop the curve getting worse or in some cases a surgery (older children)
- painkillers, spinal injections and occasionally surgery (adults).
- general exercise (recommended on the basis that it is "good for overall health" with no clear evidence that it actually helps improve Scoliosis).

TCM treatment for Scoliosis

Whilst conventional medicine considers that in most cases causes of Scoliosis are "unknown" or possibly attributed to bad posture or diet, **Traditional Chinese Medicine understands Scoliosis as being a result of an uneven**

balance of the muscles' and ligaments' tension between both sides of the back, which causes the spine to be unevenly "pulled" and to curve towards one side.

This problem can be corrected by the use of acupuncture and massage to restore the even tension between the back tissues on both sides helping to restore and maintain the natural symmetry of the spine.

The treatment is non-invasive, relatively straightforward and consists on weekly or bi-weekly acupuncture and massage sessions for a few weeks or months until the symmetry of the spine is fully restored. The risk of any side effects or discomfort is minimal compared to surgery or painkillers. Young patients have a high chance of full recovery but these tend to decrease significantly for older patients. This is why it is essential to commence treatment as soon as possible.

We could not possibly agree with a view that Scoliosis is "not a serious problem", We are certain that any young person (or even not so young one) would much prefer not to have to deal with a spine deformity for the rest of their life, just because it is not life threatening or not "too uncomfortable". Besides serious problems which may eventually develop as a consequence of Scoliosis, such as back pain and increased risk of the wear and tear of the spine or other joints and tissues due to uneven body weight distribution over the years, one should not underestimate the impact that this condition may have on someone's body image and self-esteem, especially in case of children and teenagers. Such condition can have a very limiting and lasting impact on young people's happiness and wellbeing as well as their social or professional life, which we think should be a matter of serious concern. **We would therefore encourage anyone affected by Scoliosis to seek help as soon as possible and to contact us to find out more about how we can help with this problem.**

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