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## RELIEVING SEASONAL ALLERGIES WITH ACUPUNCTURE

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Seasonal allergies, also known as hay fever or allergic rhinitis, affect millions of people worldwide. Sneezing, nasal congestion, itchy eyes, and sinus pressure can make even the most beautiful seasons feel unbearable. While conventional treatments such as antihistamines and decongestants offer temporary relief, many people seek natural and holistic approaches to address the root causes of their allergies. Acupuncture, a cornerstone of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), has gained recognition for its ability to alleviate allergy symptoms and restore balance to the body.

### **Understanding Seasonal Allergies in Chinese Medicine**

In TCM, seasonal allergies are viewed as an imbalance in the body's defensive energy, known as Wei Qi (卫气), which functions similarly to the immune system. When Wei Qi is weak, the body becomes vulnerable to external pathogens, such as wind (风), which carries pollen and other allergens into the respiratory system.



## TCM Pathology of Allergies

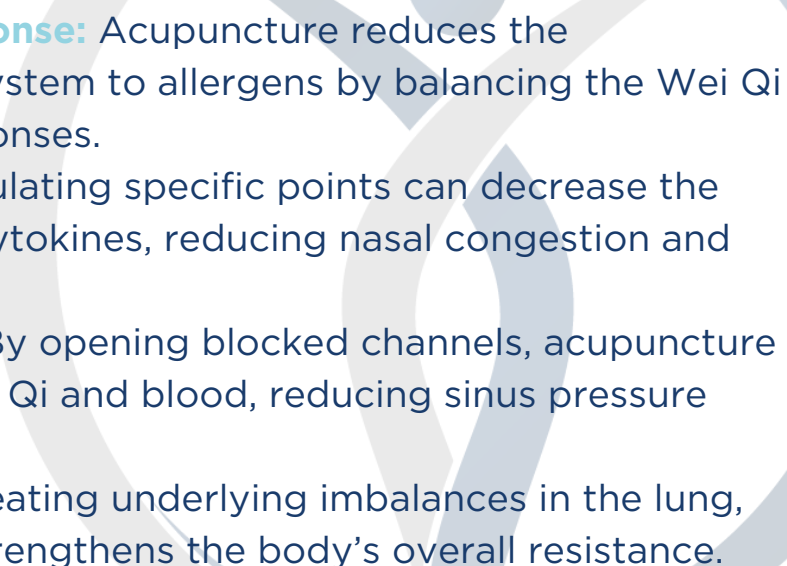
From a TCM perspective, the main syndromes related to seasonal allergies include:

- **Wind-Cold Invasion** (风寒犯表): Symptoms include clear nasal discharge, sneezing, and a slight cough. Individuals may also experience aversion to wind or cold.
- **Wind-Heat Invasion** (风热犯表): Symptoms include nasal congestion, yellow nasal discharge, red itchy eyes, and a sore throat.
- **Lung Qi Deficiency** (肺气虚): Weak lung energy can lead to frequent colds, shortness of breath, and susceptibility to allergens.
- **Spleen Qi Deficiency** (脾气虚): Poor digestion and low energy can result in the accumulation of “dampness” (湿) and “phlegm”, making allergy symptoms more severe.
- **Kidney Deficiency** (肾虚): Chronic allergies may stem from kidney weakness, which affects the body’s ability to control and store Qi, leading to persistent fatigue and immune vulnerability.

## How Acupuncture Alleviates Allergies

Acupuncture works by regulating the flow of Qi (气) and blood throughout the body. By stimulating specific acupuncture points, it helps to strengthen the immune system, reduce inflammation, and alleviate allergy symptoms.

## Benefits of Acupuncture for Allergies

- **Regulating the Immune Response:** Acupuncture reduces the overreaction of the immune system to allergens by balancing the Wei Qi and calming hyperactive responses.
  - **Reducing Inflammation:** Stimulating specific points can decrease the release of pro-inflammatory cytokines, reducing nasal congestion and sinus pressure.
  - **Clearing Blocked Meridians:** By opening blocked channels, acupuncture promotes better circulation of Qi and blood, reducing sinus pressure and congestion.
  - **Balancing Organ Systems:** Treating underlying imbalances in the lung, spleen, and kidney systems strengthens the body’s overall resistance.
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## Commonly Used Acupuncture Points for Allergies

- **LI-20 (迎香):** Located beside the nostrils, this point is effective in relieving nasal congestion and sinus pressure.
- **Yin Tang (印堂):** Between the eyebrows, this point helps alleviate sinus pain, reduce headaches, and calm the mind.
- **LI-4 (合谷):** On the hand, this point releases exterior wind and reduces symptoms like sneezing and runny nose.
- **LU-7 (列缺):** A point on the wrist that strengthens lung function and boosts Wei Qi.
- **ST-36 (足三里):** Below the knee, this point enhances the immune system and strengthens the spleen.
- **GB-20 (风池):** Located at the base of the skull, it helps to release wind and clear nasal congestion.

## Lifestyle and Dietary Recommendations

To maximize the benefits of acupuncture, TCM practitioners often recommend lifestyle modifications, including:

- **Dietary Adjustments:**
  - Avoid dairy and cold, raw foods, which can create dampness and worsen congestion.
  - Incorporate warming foods, such as ginger, garlic, and scallions, to dispel wind and cold.
- **Nasal Rinse:** Using a saline nasal rinse can help clear allergens from the nasal passages.
- **Stress Management:** Stress weakens Wei Qi. Practices like Tai Chi, Qigong, and breathing exercises help strengthen immunity and reduce symptoms.

## Conclusion

Acupuncture offers a safe and effective treatment option for seasonal allergies by addressing both the symptoms and the underlying imbalances in the body. By regulating the immune system, reducing inflammation, and strengthening the Wei Qi, acupuncture not only provides symptom relief but also helps prevent future allergy flare-ups. For individuals seeking a natural and holistic approach, TCM offers a time-tested solution to breathe freely through every season.

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