

How Do You Treat Carpal Tunnel Syndrome in Your Practice?

IN CHINESE MEDICINE, CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME is thought to be due to stagnation of Qi and Blood in the wrist from invasion of Wind, Cold, or Damp, often superimposed on a deficiency of Spleen Qi. Acupuncture is definitely worth trying since it can help patients avoid the difficulties of wrist splints, NSAIDs and steroids, and mitigate the need for surgery.

Treatment is aimed at moving the stagnant Qi and Blood in the Pericardium (PC) meridian and tonifying the Spleen Qi. Look for Ah Shi points in the wrist, and either needle them or use Gua Shu (massage) to move Qi and Blood along the course of the channel.

Local points include PC 6,7,8, HT 7,8, LU 8,9,10, and on the Dorsal side Baxie, TH 2,3 and 4,5. A careful search may reveal additional trigger points in the forearm flexors (e.g., N-UE-5 [Xishang]), and pectorals (PC-1), and also paracervical or parathoracic tension. Electroacupuncture can be used. One approach involves needling PC 6 or 7 obliquely toward the hand so as to penetrate dorsal to the transverse carpal ligament, then placing additional needles at PC 8 or TH 4/5.¹ Attach the black lead cross-handled to PC 6/7, the red lead to PC 8 or TH 4/5, and use a low frequency (2–8 Hz) stimulation to produce a pleasant tingling sensation in the hand. If low frequency does not work, try high (70–150 Hz).

General points can be added to move Qi, Blood, Wind, and Damp, like SP 9 and ST 40 (Damp), SP 10 and BL 17 (Blood), BL 13 (Wind), LI 4 and LV 3 (Qi). To tonify the Spleen Qi, add points like ST 36, SP 6, BL 20, and CV 6,12. To move Qi in the Shao Yang, use TH 8 and contralateral GB 34. For extra Spleen tonification, add a low-frequency electrical stimulation between SP 6 and 9, or between SP 9 and CV 12. Useful ear points include the wrist, Shenmen, and thalamus.

Initial treatments should be twice per week, decreasing in frequency as the symptoms improve. A course of 6 treatments is probably a minimum. All should be grounded in an integrated program that includes vitamin B and C

supplements, especially B₆ and B₁₂, daily exercise, and adequate rest.

REFERENCE

1. Schulman RA, Liem BS, Moroz A. Treatment of carpal tunnel syndrome with medical acupuncture. *Medical Acupuncture*. 2008;20(3):163–167.

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THE PREFERRED METHOD OF TREATMENT I use for treating carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is *Balance Method Acupuncture*. This method is based on Channel theory and not Traditional Chinese Medicine, Zang-Fu diagnosis. In Balance Method Acupuncture, we look at the area symptoms, whether pain, numbness, or parasthesias in relation to the closest associated Meridian or Meridians. We may use other Meridians to treat the “sick” or “unbalanced” Meridian.

The most basic technique of Balance Method treatment is called *Acupuncture 1,2,3*. Other balancing methods are Global Balance, Strategy of the 12 Magic Meridians, Seasonal Balance, and Five Element Balance.

1. Identify the Meridian(s) that is “unbalanced,” the source of the symptoms.
2. Identify the Meridian(s) that will balance the “sick” Meridian (Table 1).
3. Identify through Mirror Imaging Format or Reverse Imaging, where the treatment will be given and which point(s) to needle.

Medical Acupuncture is pleased to continue this regular feature, **Clinical Pearls**, which we have found to be very useful and practical to the readership, and very popular. All of us are confronted with clinical challenges, especially when dealing with therapeutic strategies. We hope this ongoing collection of Clinical Pearls will be easily accessible and ready to put into action for the benefit of our patients, and even ourselves. How often do we ask our colleagues, “How do you treat . . . ?” This time, we posed the question: “**How do you treat carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) in your practice?**” Herein lie your contributions. We trust that our readership will continue to participate in this section by either asking the questions or supplying the “Pearls.” If you have a “question” you would like to see answered, please send it to our Managing Editor at RosalynR@aol.com; RozMedAc@aol.com. We encourage and welcome your input and participation. Please address your answers to “Pearls” to our Managing Editor at RosalynR@aol.com; RozMedAc@aol.com.