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The Bowen technique therapy; preventing period pain; facial acupuncture

Jennifer Harper-Deacon

Sue, by e-mail

A. The Bowen technique is a gentle but powerful soft-tissue remedial therapy that involves the practitioner making a rolling movement on different muscles and tissues of the body. The defining aspect is that the practitioner will leave the room between sets of moves to give the body time to benefit from each set of movements and to promote healing. The technique was developed to treat musculoskeletal problems, including sciatica, back pain and frozen shoulder, but, being a holistic therapy, it also can also be used to manage conditions such as hay fever, asthma and digestive disorders.

In the UK, there are two main organisations teaching the Bowen technique. The oldest is the independent European College of Bowen Studies (ECBS). For a full list of accredited therapists, visit www.thebowentechnique.com. The other is the Australia-based Bowtech (www.bowtech.com), whose affiliated UK branch is the Bowen Association UK (www.bowen-technique.co.uk). Bowtech claims to teach the original technique, whereas ECBS work with modern approaches.

Q. My 15-year-old daughter suffers badly from period pain. Sometimes it is so severe that she cannot move; it even causes her to vomit. Are there any alternatives that might ease the condition?

Name and address supplied

A. Proper nutrition is important in the prevention of period pain (dysmenorrhoea), so ensure that she includes a high percentage of complex carbohydrates in her diet to keep bowel movements regular. She should also limit her intake of saturated fat, as this can contribute to pain. Instead, she should favour omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids, which are obtained from nuts, seeds and oily fish. To reduce cramps, she should choose foods rich in calcium and magnesium. These include dark green vegetables, parsley, almonds, pulses, canned salmon and brown rice.

I have had great success with Planetary Formulas Cramp Bark Squaw Vine Complex (£15.99 for 120 tablets, from the Nutri Centre; 0800 587 2290). Take one or two tablets, three times daily before meals, and stop during menstruation.

If this does not help in a few months, seek the advice of a naturopath (contact the General Council and Register of Naturopaths; 0870 745 6984), who can monitor your daughter and identify any underlying problems that may be causing her pain.

Q. I have heard that facial acupuncture can help reduce wrinkles. Do you have any more information about it, and can you recommend a practitioner in the London area?

Mrs E Stanley-Jones, London

A. In China, acupuncture was used for cosmetic purposes as early as the Sung Dynasty (from AD960) to improve the circulation of blood and chi (energy) to the extremities, including the face and hair.

The Chinese concept of "beauty from within" is expressed in terms of having a healthy body that transforms itself into "exterior beauty". Today, in the West, cosmetic acupuncture is becoming increasingly popular as an alternative "non-surgical procedure" to reduce signs of ageing. However, I must stress that for it to truly work, your practitioner must treat you holistically.

Before you have treatment, your acupuncturist will diagnose your general health by a variety of techniques, including examining your



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tongue and measuring your pulse. This will help them to understand the causes of your problems and what should be focused on to improve the condition of your skin. A good acupuncturist will put needles into acupuncture points on your body, as well as specific facial acupuncture points, to treat you and any underlying health problems that could be contributing to your wrinkles. The treatment is finished with a mini facial massage.

Dr Lily and Dr Chen are experienced Chinese doctors who practise this form of facial acupuncture at AcuMedic, in Camden, north London. A one-hour session costs £40. Contact 020 7388 6704 or e-mail clinic@acumedic.com for an appointment.

Jennifer Harper-Deacon is a registered naturopathic physician. For more information visit www.jenniferharper-deacon.com

If you have any questions or tips, write to *What's The Alternative? Style*, *The Sunday Times*, 1 Pennington Street London E98 1ST. We can only provide replies to published letters

Before following any recommendation in this column, it is important to consult your GP if you suffer from any health problems or special conditions, or are in doubt as to its suitability

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