Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Acupressure for Stress and Anxiety

This information explains how to use acupressure (AK-yoo-PREH-sher) to lower stress and anxiety. Anxiety is a strong feeling of worry or fear.

What is acupressure?

Acupressure is a kind of massage. It is based on the traditional Chinese medicine practice of acupuncture (AK-yoo-PUNK-cher). With acupressure, you put pressure on certain places on your body. These places are called acupoints (AK-yoo-poynts).

Pressing these acupoints can help your muscles relax and improve your blood flow. It can also help with many common side effects of chemotherapy.

You can do acupressure at home by using your fingers to put pressure on different acupoints. Follow the steps below to learn how to do acupressure on yourself to lower stress and anxiety.

Pressure point Extra-1 (Yin Tang)

Pressure point Extra-1 is also called Yin Tang. It is at the midpoint (the center) between your eyebrows (see Figure 1). Doing acupressure on this point can help with stress and anxiety.

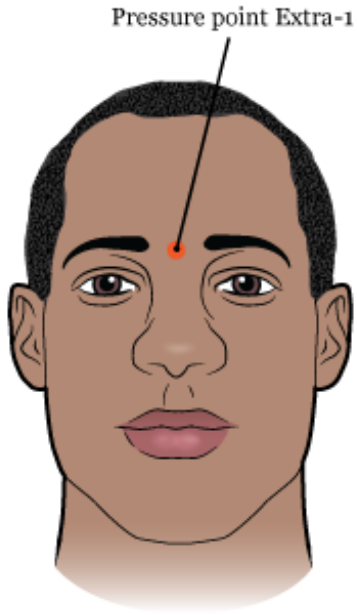

Figure 1. The midpoint (the center) between eyebrows

Do not do acupressure on this point if:

- The skin at or near the point is peeling or blistering.
- There is an open wound at or near the point.
- There is a rash at or near the point.
- There is redness, swelling, warmth, or pus at or near the point.

How to find pressure point Extra-1

1. Place yourself in a comfortable position. You can sit, stand, or lie down.
2. Using any hand, place your thumb at the midpoint (the center) between your eyebrows (see Figure 2). This is pressure point Extra-1. If you have trouble finding it, make sure your thumb is on your forehead. Do not put your thumb on the bridge of your nose.
3. Press down on this point with your thumb. Move your thumb in a circle while applying pressure. You can move it in clockwise (to the right) or counterclockwise (to the left) circles. Do this for 2 to 3 minutes.
    - Some people may find it hard to use their thumb. You can use your index finger

Figure 2. Placing thumb between eyebrows

instead.

- Be firm when applying pressure, but do not press so hard that it hurts. You may feel some aching or tenderness, but it should not be painful. If you feel any pain, you're pressing down too hard.

You can do acupressure on this point a few times a day until your symptoms get better.

Acupressure is a complementary therapy. Complementary therapies are treatments you can use along with your cancer treatments. They can help ease your symptoms.

Visit www.msk.org/integrativemedicine or call MSK's Integrative Medicine and Wellness Service at 646-449-1010 to learn about other complementary therapies.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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