

## **Tis' The Season For ... Over-Indulgence!**

Digestive problems resolved with Acupuncture.

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It's that time of year – turkey and the trimmings, mince pies, plum pudding, brandy sauce, cream, spirits... ouch! It's not so much 'pass the parcel' as 'pass the antacids'! Of course, some unfortunate folk suffer daily or regularly throughout the year with chronic problems of the digestive tract: Acid Indigestion, Hiatus Hernia, Reflux or Ulcers; Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) or Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GERD) is when the lower oesophageal sphincter (food-pipe valve) doesn't close properly and stomach contents reflux (leak back up). This usually causes 'heartburn' - a burning sensation in the chest or throat, but can manifest as pain, hoarseness, persistent dry cough or throat, or difficulty swallowing. Occasional heartburn is fairly common but if it happens more than twice a week, then it could be GERD. A Hiatus Hernia (when part of the stomach is trapped above the diaphragm, which usually separates the chest from the stomach) may contribute to this, as can being overweight, being pregnant or smoking. Some people react badly to alcohol, caffeine, fizzy drinks, citrus fruits, chocolate, fatty or spicy or fried foods, onions, tomato-based foods and surprisingly, mint, which sometimes irritates more than it soothes! There are things you can do to help yourself, like stopping:-

smoking, drinking alcohol, eating big meals, bolting your food, wearing tight clothing or eating within a couple of hours of bedtime or exercise.

Raising the head of your bed up to 8" (20cm) may help, as may reducing your stress levels, perhaps try yoga or tai chi, or simply take some 'you' time as a daily 30 minute walk in the fresh air.

Certainly, there is an array of over-the-counter antacids for mild occasional symptoms, but if you regularly take these, you should see your GP, who may prescribe tablets or arrange for tests such as a barium swallow X-ray, an endoscopy, a biopsy or a pH monitor. Your prescription may be a combination of H2 blockers (ranitidine etc) which reduce acid production, proton pump inhibitors (omeprazole etc) or prokinetics (metoclopramide etc) which empty the stomach faster or improve digestive tract motility. The tablets, whether bought or prescribed, *can* all have unwanted side-effects; commonly: diarrhoea, constipation and headache; occasionally: itching or rashes, dizziness, muscle and joint pain, blurred vision or dry mouth and rarely: fever, hallucinations, confusion and even impotence!

Acupuncture can also be effective in relieving the symptoms of Acid Indigestion, Gastric Reflux, Hiatus Hernia – *with no side effects* other than, commonly; stress reduction, improved sleep, more efficient peristalsis (gut movement), relaxation of involuntary muscle in the digestive tract, reduction in excess stomach acid production and overall feeling of well-being. If you *really* want to give up smoking, or cut out your alcohol intake, Acupuncture can help there too; reducing craving, promoting feelings of calmness and control. If you are suffering due to your unborn baby pressing on your stomach, Acupuncture treatment can offer relief for this *and* other pregnancy-related problems... and if the thought of needles makes your stomach knot, fear not: AcuLaser, ElectroAcupuncture and Moxibustion are phobia-free, non-invasive treatment alternatives.

Have a merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, holistic 2010!