# Consulting Alternative Treatments

by DONNA SCHWONTKOWSKI

## Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine

Psoriasis is one of those mysterious diseases that baffles doctors because they can't seem to find a successful treatment for it. If you've been struggling with psoriasis, you understand this perfectly.

So why not try an ancient method of healing – acupuncture – to test out the concept the doctors of traditional Chinese medicine have about illness?

They believe that there are numerous meridians in the body that connect to each other and bring health or disease, depending on whether or not the meridians are out of balance or in perfect alignment.

Each meridian has points on it, specific locations where an acupuncturist can insert a needle into them, or a reflexologist can press, based on a specific health goal. The practitioners memorize the different acupuncture points on the body and create a protocol of different points to stimulate for each patient.

### How Does It Work?

Psoriasis is an autoimmune disease, so treating the patient by targeting specific immune system points may be a good idea.

For example, there is one point used in psoriasis by some practitioners called the Outer Gate that that they focus on for immunity issues. This point allows energy to flow throughout your body.

Here's how to find it: hold your right hand out in front of you with the palm down. Do you see the bone on your hand on the side of your 5$^{th}$ finger? This is a marker point that starts your measurement. Place your second, third and fourth fingers on your wrist to count three finger widths up from the marking point on your palm. The Outer Gate point is located next to your index finger, between the tendon that runs doing the middle and the one that is on the outermost edge of the forearm.

Psoriasis is also known to flare up when you're under a lot of stress. Thus, pressing on the points on the body used to decrease stress could result in decreased stress and potentially an ease in your symptoms.

### How Chinese Medical Doctors Treat Psoriasis with TCM

The Sept. 1997 issue of the Journal of Chinese Medicine lays out some guidelines for treating psoriasis. Here are a few of them:

1. The longer the psoriasis has persisted, the longer the length of the treatment. Some cases will improve in two to three months while others will take up to six months of treatments.
2. If a patient has been treated with steroids, their treatments may take over a year.

3. Chinese herbs are a part of the treatment.
4. Certain foods are to be avoided; this includes coffee, tea, soft drinks, shrimp, beef, lamb, alcohol, and spicy foods.
5. Vegetables and fruits should be eaten in enough proportion to keep bowel movements regular.
6. There are three possible ways to treat psoriasis, depending on the lesions.

Some of the points used to treat psoriasis include the following:

**LI 4 – (Called Joining Valley)**

This point is on the back of the hand, and is located between the first and second metacarpal bones, in the middle of the second metacarpal bone, on the thumb side.

This acupressure point, used often for liver cancer, helps with constipation, diarrhea, abdominal pain, body aches and pains, and to strengthen immunity and expel gas.

**LI 11 (Called Pool at the Bend)**

The official location of this point is in the elbow crease, near the outside of the elbow on the humerus bone, technically halfway between the lateral epicondyl of the humerus and another acupuncture point called LU 5. This point is commonly used for skin diseases.

**SP 6 (Called the Three Yin Intersection)**

This is an important acupressure point because it is right in the middle of the intersection of the kidney, liver and spleen meridians. SP 6 is used as an important acupressure point in many diseases.

Here's how to find it: first, find your ankle bone on the inside of your foot (the medial malleolus); now follow the tibia bone up with your fingers. Travel three fingerwidths up from the medial malleolus. There you will find this point.

Again, because psoriasis is such a complicated disorder, it's best to improve your chances of recovery by scheduling acupuncture sessions with a licensed acupuncturist.