

*Kath Bartlett, MS, LAc*

Asheville Center for Chinese Medicine  
70 Woodfin Place Suite West Wing Two  
Asheville, North Carolina 28801 828.258.2777  
[kbartlett@AcupunctureAsheville.com](mailto:kbartlett@AcupunctureAsheville.com)  
[www.AcupunctureAsheville.com](http://www.AcupunctureAsheville.com)

31

*Acupuncture  
Chinese Herbology  
Nutritional & Lifestyle Counseling*

## **CHINESE MEDICINE TREATS SKIN CONDITIONS: A STEROID-FREE SOLUTION FOR ECZEMA, HIVES, HERPES & OTHER RASHES AND ACNE**

---

By, Kath Bartlett, MS, LAc

People generally associate acupuncture with treating pain or stress relief. Many are not aware that acupuncture is also effective for treating chronic or systemic conditions, such as allergies, digestive problems and gyn conditions or fibromyalgia. In fact, the majority of my patients come for treatment of chronic conditions that have not responded well to standard western medical care.

Skin conditions, like eczema, are a case in point. I have treated eczema in patients of all ages, from infants to 90 year olds, always with effective results. These patients come after having been on steroidal drugs for some time, with little to no effect. Why is Chinese Medicine so effective at treating skin conditions when western medicine can't help? Simply, because western medicine focuses on treating the symptom: the skin eruption, where as Chinese medicine treats the systemic problems in the entire body that created the symptom.

When a patient comes to see an acupuncturist for a skin (or any other kind of) problem, the acupuncturist examines the skin and asks questions about what makes the condition better or worse. We want to know if the skin is dry and flaky, or red, oozy with pustules? Is it worse with stress or eating certain foods, such as fried-greasy foods or dairy products? Is it worse with exposure to toxins and chemicals, after an emotional event, or does the appearance of the rash coincide with the timing of the menstrual cycle (this is often the case with hives, or urticarial eruptions)? After examining the skin and asking questions about the nature of the rash, the acupuncturist moves on to investigating the other systems of the body, checking digestion, sleep and urine and bowel habits. Lastly we ask about emotions, is this person stressed, anxious, grieving or depressed? After examining all of these factors, the acupuncturist formulates a diagnosis, incorporating the condition of the entire body to explain the systemic problem that has caused this person to have skin symptoms.

In brief, we look for a couple of general constitutional patterns. Skin conditions that are red, and oozing are called damp-heat conditions: too much water accumulation (oozing) and too much heat (red-hot skin). Or we look for Blood deficiency (different than the western medical condition called anemia) meaning too little blood or fluids to nourish the skin, causing dryness and flaking. Whereas western medicine basically treats conditions of the same name (acne, eczema, psoriasis) in the same way, Chinese medicine treats conditions of the same constitutional pattern similarly: damp-heat or blood deficiency. So the acupuncturist treats different types of eczema, acne, etc. differently depending on the constitutional pattern involved. This individualized, pattern-based approach to diagnosis and treatment explains why Chinese medicine is so often effective at treating conditions that western medicine is ineffective in addressing.

A patient age 25, I'll call her Jenny, came to me for treatment of eczema, hives, asthma, depression and anxiety. Chinese Medicine feels that the lungs rule the skin because both organs filter what's coming from the outside environment into the body. Often we see allergies and asthma concurrent with skin conditions. Jenny had asthma since childhood, a history of eczema on her elbows and legs that was hot, itching with fluid-filled vesicles (damp-heat). The hives had appeared on her back five months previous to our first meeting. Jenny smoked ½ a pack of cigarettes a day and wanted to quit. I have noticed a direct relationship with skin problems and emotions and smoking: skin getting worse during emotional times or with smoking.

I began treating Jenny with acupuncture and Chinese herbal formulas and asked her to come twice a week for treatment. After nine days, Jenny no longer had asthma symptoms, the hives and eczema had improved, and she was no longer depressed. After three weeks of treatment Jenny no longer had eczema on her elbows and her anxiety level had decreased. I reduced visits to once a week. After four weeks of treatment Jenny had cut her smoking in half, to 5 cigarettes a day. After five weeks of treatment Jenny no longer experienced anxiety. I reduced visits to twice a month. After two and a half months, Jenny reduced her smoking 75%, to 3 cigarettes daily. After three months the rash was much improved and Jenny only had a few skin eruptions. I reduced visits to once a month. After five months of treatment all symptoms had resolved completely.

## *Experienced, Dedicated, Effective*

**Kath Bartlett, MS, LAc** is the owner of the Asheville Center for Chinese Medicine. Bartlett practices in a traditional Chinese style incorporating acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Tui Na massage, dietary and lifestyle counseling to treat a wide variety of health conditions. She achieves especially effective results treating back, neck, knee and joint pain, headaches, allergies & sinus problems, chronic bronchitis, fatigue, fibromyalgia, heartburn, bowel problems, PMS, menstrual pain, Perimenopausal complaints (hot flashes) depression and anxiety, non-responsive eczema, hives and acne.

Bartlett is a contributing writer for several Asheville publications, such as: Rapid River Magazine, Whole Health News and New Life Journal, in addition to the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine Newsletter and The Pulse of Oriental Medicine web magazine. She frequently lectures about Chinese medicine at various colleges and civic organizations, including the MAHEC Residency Program, A&B Technical College and UNCA's College for Seniors. Bartlett has appeared as a featured guest on the "Health Watch" segment of KUSI News in San Diego.

Bartlett relocated to Asheville from San Diego, California. There, she externed at several University of California, San Diego Medical School sites, including the Owen's Clinic for HIV+ at Mercy Hospital. Bartlett earned her Masters of Science degree in Traditional Oriental Medicine from the respected Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, San Diego. Bartlett is Board Certified in Oriental Medicine by the National Certification Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM). She completed advance studies of the classics texts of Chinese medical theory with Dr. Min Fan, formally of Bei Jing University. Bartlett received her Bachelor of Arts degree from UCLA.

Bartlett is a member of the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCAAOM) and is a member at large of the American Association of Oriental Medicine (AAOM).