

# Cosmetic Acupuncture.

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**Abstract:** Cosmetic acupuncture is a practice rooted in traditional Chinese medicine that stimulates the skin and regulates organ systems to improve skin health and combat signs of aging. It combines holistic treatment with cosmetic goals, offering natural and beneficial results. The selection of acupuncture points, techniques such as shallow needling, thread embedding, cupping, and moxibustion, among others, are used to target specific skin conditions and promote rejuvenation. Cosmetic acupuncture is safe, comprehensive, and effective in addressing various skin concerns while adhering to the principles of traditional Chinese medicine.

**Keywords:** Beauty, Cosmetology, Acupuncture, Acupoints, Moxibustion, Cupping.

## 1. Introduction

Cosmetic acupuncture is based on the “holistic view” of traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). It stimulates the local skin to promote anti-aging, improve skin complexion, reduce wrinkles, and treat discosmetic dermatosis by regulating functions of TCM organ systems (zang-fu) and metabolism of essence, qi, blood and body fluids.

Recently, cosmetic acupuncture treatment mainly focused on facial shaping and lifting, weight loss, chloasma, acne, dark circles, baggy eyelids, wrinkles, skin tone beautification, and breast augmentation. Acupuncture has marked effects in treating obesity, chloasma, acne, flat warts, senile plaque, hair loss and other cosmetically debilitating conditions.

Cosmetic acupuncture combines holistic and local treatment, as well as healthy and beautification. It produces natural and healthful cosmetic results. Anti-aging treatments for entire body are more significant than local acupuncture since cosmetology is based on the entire adjustment of human body. In the other hand, acupuncture is highly safe despite an invasive procedure. It has a very high overall safety profile, other than tolerable needle pain and minor occasional bleeding, there are almost no adverse reactions. In addition, cosmetic acupuncture is a comprehensive and high-efficiency treatment that can simultaneously resolve various types of skin condition such as sagging skin, wrinkles, poor complexion, chloasma, acne, and hair loss. Furthermore, it is capable of combining therapy and cosmetic effects. For patient who experienced discomfort e.g., sleep disturbance, indigestion, irregular menstruation, etc., his discomforts are able to alleviated by integrating acupuncture generally and cosmetically. Therefore, this is an effective strategy for accomplish two goals in one.

## 2. The theoretical basis and mechanism of acupuncture cosmetology

Systemic treatment is a vital element of treatment. The qi and blood in meridians are filled and flowing smoothly, which is also the fundamental guarantee of cosmetology. We can regulate and replenish qi and essence of the meridians and zang-fu, as well as regulate and benefit the heart-spirit, by acting on emotions. In general, from perspective of the theory of acupuncture points, facial acupoints are particularly cosmetically selected. Acupoints located on extremities are often beneficial for regulation of meridians whereas

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zang-fu are regulated by acupoints located on the torso. As a result, it is required to select acupoints from all over body for general treatment of acupuncture in order to achieve the purpose of comprehensive regulation. Localized treatment stimulates and enhances Wei-defensive qi to nourish skin. According to TCM theory, it has the effect of nourishing the skin. Strong Wei-defensive qi promotes healthy skin by regulating blood and energy circulation in human body whereas a weakening of Wei-defensive qi can lead to a variety of skin conditions, including acne, eczema, and rashes.

### **3. The principle of acupoint selection in cosmetic acupuncture:**

#### *3.1. Selection of local acupoints*

Facial acupoints are the common points used in acupuncture beauty treatments. We can choose all acupoints distributed on the face or choose the Ashi point depending on the condition of skin lesions and wrinkles on the face. The acupoints of the stomach meridian, gallbladder meridian, and Du meridian (governor vessel) are widely distributed throughout the face. Acupuncture on the face can improve blood circulation and collagen formation, which can help reduce wrinkles and fine lines on the face, rejuvenate the skin, restore its natural glow, and promote a younger, healthier appearance. The acupoints on the face have beauty effects as well as regulating the qi and blood of the yang meridians, which promote the overall qi and blood circulation of the human body.

#### *3.2. Selection of distal acupoints*

LI11, LI9, and LI4 of the large intestine meridian, CV12, CV6, and CV4 of the Ren meridian (conception vessel), SP6, SP10, ST36, ST25, TE5, PC6, and LR3 are commonly used acupoints. Scraping or cupping on the Du meridian and bladder meridian along the back of the torso can be done to regulate the yang and Wei-defensive qi and eliminate excessive pathogenic qi in the exterior.

#### *3.3. Selection of acupoints based on syndrome differentiation*

Cosmetic treatments generally involve three principles of TCM: tonifying qi and blood, regulating the balance of yin and yang, and coordinating the functions of various organs. For example, we can select ST36 (Zusanli), CV4 (Guanyuan), and CV6 (Qihai) for qi deficiency. For dampness and heat accumulation, acupoints that promote the flow of qi and blood, such as ST40 (Fenglong), LI11 (Quchi), and SP9 (Yinlingquan), can be used.

#### *3.4. Selection of acupoints based on special therapeutic effects*

Bian Que Xin Shu states that "even without any problems, frequent moxibustion on Guanyuan (CV4), Qihai (CV6), Mingmen (GV4), and Zhongwan (CV12) can work for longevity". Zhen Jiu Zi Sheng Jing states that "moxibustion on the umbilicus with mice feces every year makes those with old ages but young faces". These acupoints themselves have anti-aging effects, and the overall anti-aging effect of moxibustion is also widely recognized.

The common methods of acupuncture cosmetology include various acupuncture techniques, moxibustion, thread embedding, cupping, and scraping. At present, the thinnest acupuncture needle is only 0.10 mm in diameter. It is made in China. There is a new type of needle that is similar to the intradermal needle. Procedure is as follow: a forceps is used to hold needle handle and the needle body is inserted into the skin. The magnetic rod is operated proximity to the needle handle in order to stimulates the needle body. Then, the needle is buried under the surface of skin. This new type of needle is particularly effective at treating wrinkles, thus, it is named as "the golden needle for smoothing wrinkles". Bloodletting needle and three-edged needle are often used in treatment of skin inflammation, while fire needles are commonly used in the treatment of warts and herpes zoster. Thread embedding needles are commonly used for skin tightening and lifting.

## 4. Techniques

### 4.1. Facial acupuncture techniques for beauty

Generally, acupuncture on the face usually adopts a shallow needling method, and the direction of needling can be straight, oblique, or flat. Needling depth reaches the subcutaneous layer because the support for the facial SMAS (superficial musculoaponeurotic system) fascia is located at about 4.5 millimeter under the skin (between fat and muscle). Moreover, according to the principles of TCM, the Wei-defensive qi can be stimulating to nourish the skin through shallow needling.

In order to slimming face or reduce double chin, shallow needling can be performed with multiple needles on the cheeks or chin. Acupuncture has a noticeable and significant improvement on the appearance of the double chin.

### 4.2. Acupuncture for baggy eyes

We use very thin needles with a diameter of 0.10mm. The needles are horizontally inserted into the skin with the angle of the tip facing upward and penetrated under the skin. Formation of eye bags is mainly due to fat protrusion and loose skin. Acupuncture is more effective for improving protruding fat bags under the eyes, while it is slightly less effective for treating sagging skin and protruding fat.

### 4.3. Acupuncture for dark circles below eyes

Multi-needles are shallowly and inserted oblique to the localized area. The possibility of bleeding is reduced when thinner needles are used, as the skin around the eyes is very thin.

### 4.4. Acupuncture for wrinkle removal

Acupuncture generally use oblique or horizontal needling to treat wrinkles, and the acupuncture direction is perpendicular to the direction of the wrinkle. We can also use manipulation techniques to relax tense facial muscles to avoid static wrinkles caused by excessive contraction of facial muscles. The golden needle mentioned above is able to relieve wrinkles.

### 4.5. Acupuncture for facial scars

We can treat facial scars through local surrounded needling method. Acupuncture has a certain improvement effect on old scars. A patient experiences of the post-operative three months after facial cyst surgery, she received seven acupuncture treatments (about seven weeks) for the post-operative scar and it is basically resolved.

### 4.6. Acupuncture for facial abscesses

The facial abscesses can be treated using the same method. The local needling has a noticeable effect on superficial inflammation of the skin. E.g., a young female patient complained of facial abscesses. She has received intravenous antibiotics for three days and oral antibiotics for five days. The abscess was not relieved after medication treatment. This patient's mother was very worried, hence her visit for acupuncture treatment. Oral and topical antibiotics in combination with acupuncture treatment were given for three treatments. As a result, her abscess was significantly resolved within ten days. This patient would almost certainly have undergone surgical operation if she had not come for acupuncture.

### 4.7. Acupuncture for facial swelling

E.g., The patient developed facial swelling after being infected with COVID-19, which was diagnosed as skin inflammation in dermatology. Her current conditions were not resolved with clinical medications for more than 2 months. She was sad and despairing. She was then visited for acupuncture treatment. Localized facial area and extremities were punctured for twice or three times per week. The facial swelling was gradually reduced; it improved significantly after every visit. No recurrence after six weeks of treatments.

#### 4.8. Acupoint thread embedding for beauty

The acupuncture discomfort experienced is minimal as we used needles with diameter of 0.35mm, which is equivalent to a fine needle. The operation of thread embedding method generally adopts flat inserting, and the entire body of needle should be inserted into the skin. It has excellent effects on facial firming and tightening, improving skin complexion, also, its cosmetology maintenance time is relatively long, in general, it is treated once every six months.

#### 4.9. Cupping therapy for beauty

Bloodletting puncture and cupping are often used to treat facial inflammation, such as acne. We generally perform moving cupping on bladder meridian on the back of the torso at first. After the procedure, the skin turns reddish with prominent red papules (also known as positive reaction points). Then, pricked the reaction points, cupping is retained for five minutes to relieve the facial inflammation by creating a negative pressure to increase bleeding.

Cupping therapy can also be used on the face: The specific forms of the cupping used on the face are called "soft cup" or "easy cup". It is cylindrical in shape and made of silicone material. After applying massage oil to the face, we proceed to moving cupping. Lift and move the cup from inferior to superior, and medial to lateral, respectively. During the facial cupping procedure, do not repeatedly perform at the same line. It may cause a temporary subcutaneous capillary rupture and bruising (known as ecchymosis or "marks"). Also, the slight hyperemia underneath the skin helps to promote blood circulation and stimulates skin metabolism.

#### 4.10. Moxibustion for beauty

The moxibustion jade beauty stick is an efficient tool for cosmetic treatment. This beauty stick has a needle for inserting moxa sticks the moxa stick is first inserted into the needle and ignite it. Rotated the jade cover over the beauty stick once ensuring the moxa stick has been burned. There are two rows of ventilation holes. Initially, two rows of holes can leak out. This allows for more air enters, completing the combustion. The jade turns hot as the temperature rise rapidly. When the jade has reached the ideal temperature, a row of holes can be covered with a fabric to prevent additional temperature rise as less air enters. We can regulate the temperature of the jade with this fabric cover. The massage oil or essential oil is applied on the skin before using the moxibustion beauty stick. Moxibustion is then applied on the face, from inferior to superior, and medial to lateral, respectively. Crucial acupoints can be subjected to prolonged moxibustion. Moxibustion on the face can promote blood circulation in the face, warm the meridians, and remove blood stasis, which is highly effective for treating darkening and discoloration of the facial skin.

## 5. Conclusion

Overall, cosmetic acupuncture combines traditional Chinese medicine principles with modern cosmetic goals to provide a holistic approach to skin health and rejuvenation. Its focus on comprehensive regulation, minimal invasiveness, and various treatment techniques make it a popular choice for those seeking natural and effective cosmetic improvements. Along with therapies such as acupuncture, thread embedding, cupping, and moxibustion, there are also techniques like guasha and Chinese medicine facial masks that share outstanding cosmetic results.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declare no conflict of interest.

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