

## The 'Magic' Touch – The Simple Guide to Acupressure from Your Own Home

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### Introduction

Acupressure is an ancient art that dates back thousands of years. It is often considered part of traditional Chinese medicine but today it can be found in all parts of the world. I am Kamal Sehgal, a simple Indian homemaker but with what I believe is a special gift - that of the art of acupressure. The following article is intended to share my knowledge of this technique in a manner that would be useful to the simple, untrained individual. A do-it-yourself guide, if you like, of acupressure techniques and tips that can be applied for different ailments or simply for day-to-day problems; be it body ache or the common cold. This article will not dwell into the scientific basis of the art of acupressure but simply list different techniques you can try from the comfort of your very home and decide for yourself the value of this ancient art of acupressure.

I will begin with a brief introduction to the underlying principal of acupressure.

The art of acupressure abides by the theory that there exist special acupoints, or acupressure points, that lie along meridians, or channels, in your body. It is believed that through these invisible channels flows vital energy or a life force called qi (ch'i). It is also believed that these meridians connect specific organs or networks of organs, organizing a system of communication throughout your body. The meridians begin at your fingertips, connect to your brain, and then connect to an organ associated with a certain meridian.

### What's what?

The following is a quick summary of what each finger and corresponding toes on your hands and feet, respectively, are responsible for:

- the ring finger corresponds to the heart
- the middle finger to the kidney, the blood circulation
- the middle finger and index finger together - consists of points for your eyes
- tip of the thumb corresponds to the brain and the length of the thumb corresponds to the spine
- the base of the thumb corresponds to the tail bone, back
- little finger is associated with water in the body and is also linked to the ears

In addition:

- the ears are our energy webs
- the nose corresponds to the centre bone in the chest (can be implicated in colds etc.)
- the back of the hands correspond to the chest
- the sides of your feet correspond to your spine

For a more detailed description of acupressure points on your hands and feet, please refer to the literature [1,2].

### The endocrine glands

Endocrine glands secrete different hormones directly into the

bloodstream. The major glands of the endocrine system include the pineal gland, pituitary gland, pancreas, ovaries, testes, thyroid gland, parathyroid gland, hypothalamus, gastrointestinal tract and adrenal glands. These glands control a host of different bodily functions, some of which are detailed in the table below (Table 1) [3] (Figure 1) [2].

### Fix it yourself

With the knowledge of which part of your body may be responsible for your particular ailment, one can attempt to alleviate any problem by simply applying pressure to (pressing) the corresponding areas either with one's fingers or using one of many available acupressure tools (Figure 2). The idea is to repeatedly apply pressure to the points concerned, which would activate, clear the (affected) channels or meridians earlier described. To achieve this, one can also make use of acupressure slippers or the acu-ring (Figure 2). The concept for these is the same in that they press or rather keep pressed the different acupoints.

The arrows indicate recommended motions, i.e. up-down movement with tool or twisted actions. These tools can be purchased from certain shops or may be designed and produced from an enthusiastic carpenter or craftsman.

In addition to pressing acupressure points, there are also some other handy tips that are linked to or associated with the art of acupressure.

### Tape it up

Applying clinical plaster tape (Figure 3) to any part of the body in pain, be it the back or legs or wherever else, can help alleviate any muscle strain that may be responsible for the pain. The tape should cover the whole area affected and should not be kept wet. As in after a shower, the wet tape should be dried down with a hairdryer or such. You will find that this simple technique will reduce or completely get rid of the pain in the affected area in quick time. This technique is usually applicable to chronic pain or injuries. The duration of use would depend on the severity of the pain and should be adjusted accordingly, i.e. tape for a longer duration for more severe pain.

Acupressure taping has its roots in traditional Chinese medicine but has been more recently described by two German doctors, Hans-Ulrich Hecker and Kelly Liebchen [4].

Taping up the knees or using a crepe bandage to tie up the calves, ankles can help with weakness in the legs (Figure 4).

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Gland	Hormone/s secreted	Function/s
Pituitary gland	Antidiuretic hormone (vasopressin)	Causes kidneys to retain water and, along with aldosterone, helps control blood pressure
	Corticotropin (ACTH)	Controls the production and secretion of hormones by the adrenal glands
	Growth hormone	Controls growth and development Promotes protein production
	Luteinizing hormone and follicle-stimulating hormone	Control reproductive functions, including the production of sperm and semen in men and egg maturation and menstrual cycles in women Control male and female sexual characteristics (including hair distribution, muscle formation, skin texture and thickness, voice, and perhaps even personality traits)
	Oxytocin	Causes muscles of the uterus to contract during childbirth and after delivery and stimulates contractions of milk ducts in the breast, which move milk to the nipple
	Prolactin	Starts and maintains milk production in the ductal glands of the breast (mammary glands)
	Thyroid-stimulating hormone	Stimulates the production and secretion of hormones by the thyroid gland
Parathyroid glands	Parathyroid hormone	Controls bone formation and the excretion of calcium and phosphorus
Thyroid gland	Thyroid hormone	Regulates the rate at which the body functions (metabolic rate)
Adrenal glands	Calcitonin	In people, has unclear function, but in other species, regulates calcium balance
	Aldosterone	Helps regulate salt and water balance by causing the kidneys to retain salt and water and excrete potassium
	Cortisol	Has widespread effects throughout the body Especially has anti-inflammatory action Maintains blood sugar level, blood pressure, and muscle strength Helps control salt and water balance
Pancreas	Glucagon	Raises the blood sugar level
	Insulin	Lowers the blood sugar level Affects the processing (metabolism) of sugar, protein, and fat throughout the body
Kidneys	Erythropoietin	Stimulates red blood cell production
	Renin	Controls blood pressure
Ovaries	Estrogen	Controls the development of female sex characteristics and the reproductive system
	Progesterone	Prepares the lining of the uterus for implantation of a fertilized egg and readies the mammary glands to secrete milk
Testes	Testosterone	Controls the development of male sex characteristics and the reproductive system
Digestive tract	Cholecystokinin	Controls gallbladder contractions that cause bile to enter the intestine Stimulates release of digestive enzymes from the pancreas
	Glucagon-like peptide	Increases insulin release from the pancreas
	Ghrelin	Controls growth hormone release from the pituitary gland Causes sensation of hunger
Hypothalamus	Thyrotropin-releasing hormone	Stimulates the release of thyroid-stimulating hormone and prolactin
	Gonadotropin-releasing hormone	Stimulates release of luteinizing hormone and follicle-stimulating hormone
	Corticotropin-releasing hormone	Stimulates release of adrenocorticotropic hormone
	Growth hormone-releasing hormone	Stimulates release of growth hormone
	Somatostatin	Inhibits release of growth hormone, thyroid-stimulating hormone, and insulin

Table 1: List of some of the endocrine glands and the functions mediated by their respective hormones.

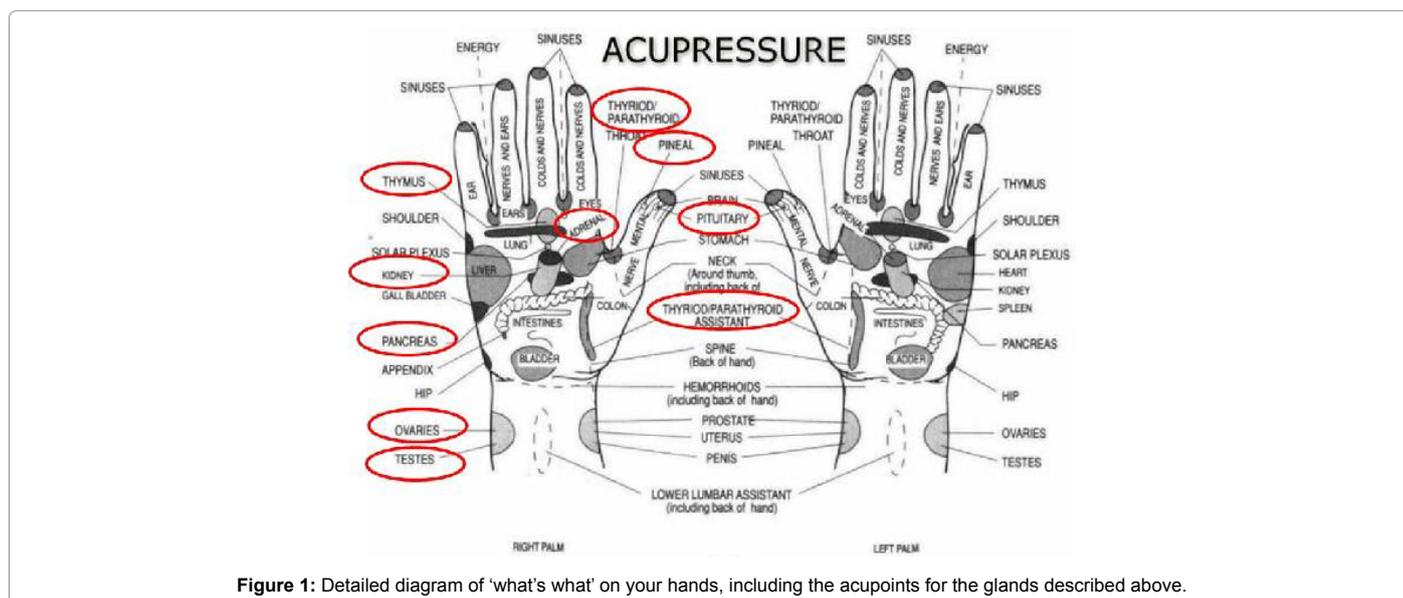


Figure 1: Detailed diagram of 'what's what' on your hands, including the acupoints for the glands described above.



**Figure 2:** Different acupressure tools that may be utilized for activating the acupoints on the hands and feet.



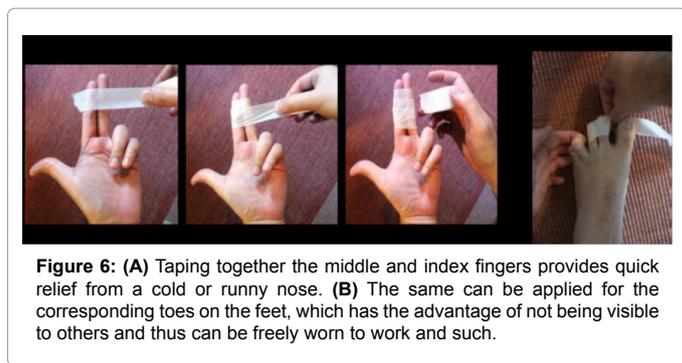
**Figure 3:** Simple clinical plaster tape.



**Figure 4:** Applying plaster tape on the knee (or any other body part) can provide relief from pain or other discomfort associated with the area of the body.



**Figure 5:** Milder tape to tie the fingers or toes.



**Figure 6:** (A) Taping together the middle and index fingers provides quick relief from a cold or runny nose. (B) The same can be applied for the corresponding toes on the feet, which has the advantage of not being visible to others and thus can be freely worn to work and such.

Taping up the sides of the insides of your foot is useful for back (or spine related) problems.

Taping up your knuckles, the back of the hands can help with chest aches.

Using a milder type of medical tape, one can also tape up the fingers or toes to constantly keep pressed the associated acupoints on each (Figure 5).

Using this same tape if one were to tape together the index and middle fingers or the corresponding two toes on your foot, immediate relief is gotten from a cold, runny nose (Figure 6).

### Heat it up

Another useful method is to apply heat to an affected area. This improves blood circulation in that area, which can help alleviate an associated problem or ailment. A strategy tried and tested over the last couple of decades is using the poultice. This method of heating is more effective than the conventional 'hot water bottle', as this is deeper penetrating. The following is one recipe for this:

You will need:

- o A heavy bottom wok (kadai)
- o 2 cups of whole wheat flour
- o 1 table spoon of turmeric powder (haldi)
- o A cup of clarified butter (ghee)
- o Water
- Dry roast the flour and the turmeric on slow heat for 4-5 minutes.
- Add the ghee and stir and mix it well for a minute.
- Continue stirring constantly while slowly adding water till you get a thick 'cake batter' -like consistency. It should be smooth and oily.

This is now ready to use.

Empty the poultice onto a clean plastic sheet or cloth. This is simply for ease of handling. Place the poultice directly onto the skin to heat the affected part. Use it as hot as possible. When the poultice cools down it can be reheated in a microwave by wrapping-up in the plastic sheet and heating for 1-2 minutes depending on the power settings. After use, the poultice can be stored in the fridge well wrapped-up in a plastic bag to prevent drying out. It can be heated and reused for up to a week to ten days.

The ghee/oil is deep penetrating. The turmeric is also very beneficial

and the flour helps retain the heat. This strategy works miraculously for joint pains and tired or aching muscles, as well as stiff necks and such.

### **Concluding remarks**

It is hoped that this article gives quick, easy to-do tips on alleviating general problems that one might be experiencing using acupressure techniques. There are of course more extensive descriptions of acupressure available in the literature but the aim of this article was to provide a bite-sized account of helpful acupressure tips that would be easy to digest for the lay person. This coupled with my personal experiences of using tapes or the poultice I am sure will benefit anyone who ventures to just try.

### **Disclaimer**

I would like to state that the techniques listed in this article are not necessarily a substitute for conventional medical therapy or allopathic treatment. That remains to the individual's discretion. The aim of this article is just to provide an additional (not necessarily alternative) strategy for treatment.

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