

Moxibustion

Moxibustion consists in the caloric stimulation of some specific acupuncture points by burning moxa or moxa wool from *Artemisia Vulgaris* (ai ye, or mugwort) which is a type of *Chrysanthemum* or other herbs on, around, or above those Acupuncture points. Moxa leaf is bitter and acrid, gives up warmth in small amounts and strong heat when used in large amounts.

Moxibustion is used for conditions that do not respond well to herbs and acupuncture treatments and also can be used in combination with those two to increase the effects of treatment. It can be applied to many diseases such as deficiencies, excesses and heat syndromes and also for acute conditions. The choice of when, where, and if Moxibustion is to be used is a matter of clinical judgement for the practitioner, in consultation with the patient.

There are two types of Moxibustion, *direct Moxibustion* and *indirect Moxibustion*.

In direct Moxibustion, a small, cone-shaped amount of moxa is placed on top of an acupuncture point and then ignited. This type of Moxibustion is further classified into two types: *scarring and non-scarring*. With scarring Moxibustion, the ignited moxa is allowed to remain onto the point until it burns out completely. This may lead to localized scarring, blisters and scarring after healing. With non-scarring Moxibustion, the moxa is placed on the point and lit, but is extinguished or removed before it burns the skin. The patient will experience a pleasant heating sensation that penetrates deep into the skin, but should not experience any pain, blistering or scarring unless the moxa is left in place for too long.

Indirect Moxibustion is the most popular and frequently used modality of Moxibustion and it can be done in many different ways according to the underlying condition (s)/disease (s).

- Placing a medium between the cone of moxa and the skin (interposed Moxibustion). This method combines the effects and benefits of the herb

used as a medium and the moxa. Different mediums may be used such as ginger, garlic, salt, aconite cake (Fu Zi), pepper, etc. A flat slice of the particular herb is perforated with a needle and then placed on the acupuncture point to be treated; a cone of moxa is then set securely on top and ignited; once the patient feels that the heat is enough, the whole wafer is removed and after a moment's of respite the whole process is repeated; The duration of treatment should be between 10 -15 minutes. The acupuncturist will select the medium according to your condition.

- Moxa stick or roll. This is a more easily controlled method than the other forms. Basically, the stick like cigar of moxa is held at about half an inch from the skin and directly above the acupuncture point to be treated for about 5 - 10 minutes or until the skin becomes red in the vicinity of the point.
- Warming needle Moxibustion. This is an integration of acupuncture and Moxibustion and is used when both, the retention of needles and Moxibustion is recommended. The needle is inserted in the acupuncture point and once the needle sensation is obtained a protective cover is placed over the skin, then a clump of moxa is placed on the other end of the needle and ignited from below. The process is repeated several times.

There are other different ways to apply indirect Moxibustion and nowadays we have different other mediums, as well as moxa preparations such as smokeless moxa, stick on moxa, warmers, etc., etc.

The aim of strengthening the body cannot be attained by just applying Moxibustion once or twice; it requires persistence for a long time although, it does not mean that one should receive Moxibustion every day. For the purpose of convalescence for the weak and sick, Moxibustion may be applied once every 2-3 days in the early stage; yet for reinforcement of the body or longevity, it should be once a week in the early stage. When it has shown some effect, the frequency can be reduced to once a month, and later, once or twice every three months, or even once or twice a year.

General indications of Moxibustion:

- To prevent diseases and maintain health
- To warm the acupuncture meridians and expel cold
- To induce the smooth flow of Qi and Blood
- To strengthen Yang from collapse