

## Do we really need a red warning light?

Driving along the motorway and the red warning light on the dashboard starts to flash. It goes out, phew, what a relief, the journey can continue without interruption. It continued to do this for the entire journey and it was becoming irritating. It followed the same pattern until at last it just continued to flash without going off - Brain wave!, Stop the car and remove the dreaded bulb. This was a brilliant idea the journey is much more enjoyable.

After the loud bang, smoke was billowing from under the bonnet. The car limped to the hard shoulder and came to a complete stop. The journey had come to an abrupt end. Not only was this a total inconvenience, but a very expensive lesson!

### ***Traditional Chinese Acupuncture as a preventative:- (unfortunately not for cars!!)***

Good health is everything. It is the greatest gift that life can offer us. When we lose our health, everything else we possess becomes of little value. When we are in a hospital bed with a life threatening condition, whether we are a prince or pauper the emotional and physical suffering becomes the same. Obviously some things are unfortunately unavoidable. However, we do have choices, we can ignore the warning signals our body gives us and eat the wrong foods, drink too much, smoke and live in the fast lane and just hope for the best, or open our minds to a better understanding of the body, treat ourselves with respect and make some personal effort to change our lifestyle just as much as we can.

A ***diet*** so rich in refined carbohydrates and saturated fat coupled with little need to use the calories, has resulted in new forms of nutritional pathology such as diabetes and atheroma (hard/cholesterol porridge). Over nutrition together with lack of exercise creates a surplus in calories which the body preserves as fat rather than allowing it to go to waste. The chronic affects of a faulty diet, stress, smoking, pollution even unhappiness are subtle and do not begin to make themselves felt until the chain breaks at its weakest link and manifests itself in one form or another.

However much care we take of our bodies it is unfortunately a fact that they start to degenerate at a certain stage and although we can slow this process we cannot reverse it to any great extent. This ageing process is nature's way of ensuring that a large percentage of a single species does not continue to exist beyond reproductive age.

Sometimes we can feel unwell without being "ill" or we can feel irritable or moody and not know the reason behind it. The ability of ***acupuncture*** to promote a healthy mind and body means that it is often used as an effective form of preventative medicine. It can strengthen the constitution thereby leading to increased energy levels, better sleep and an enhanced sense of overall well being. It can be used alongside conventional medicine in the treatment of both acute and chronic disease.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), we recognise that a balance of Qi - (our body's energy), is essential to health and harmony of the body. When the Qi is blocked or stagnated, the body's meridians – (lines of communication), are weakened and pain or disease will occur. Imagine a river that is dammed with debris, by removing the blockage the water can flow freely again. Acupuncture works by removing the debris – stress, built-up emotions, muscle spasms or nerve irritation. A fully qualified, competent acupuncture practitioner, will insert the needles into specific point locations on the body that will trigger the release of neurotransmitters in the brain that can, among other things, reduce pain and inflammation and stimulate the natural healing in the body's tissues. Research has shown that acupuncture causes the body to produce natural steroids and promote the production of natural endorphins. Steroids decrease inflammation, while endorphins are produced by the body kill pain. Both substances can play an integral part in the breaking up of the pain cycle.

By receiving regular acupuncture treatments, it will prevent a chronic condition from developing. By waiting until the pain/disease is unbearable or you seek acupuncture treatment as a last resort, it is like trying to restore order after unrest has already broken out, or waited to dig a well until you are weak from thirst. TCM Acupuncture is given as a preventative measure when the person is healthy as well as after they become ill. It is customary to receive treatment at the beginning of each season to strengthen the immune system for the coming weather changes along with other times the body is not up to par. In ancient China, the doctor was paid for the months the patient was well – this is an example of how much the Chinese believed in preventative medicine.

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