



*"Miracles start to happen  
when you give as much  
energy to your dreams as  
you do to your fears"*

Richard Wilkins

## ACUPRESSURE

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The objective of this chapter is to give you an understanding of acupressure and the pressure points that are helpful for a skincare therapist. It also demonstrates the benefits of teaching some basic pressure points to your clients. There are easy steps that can be shown to your clients to help relieve stress-related problems, both physical and emotional. This allows them to actively participate in their own healing - something they will love you for.

As with previous chapters, the aim is to inform and familiarise. It is well worth the additional reading to understand more fully the application of this wonderful and highly effective practice. Alternatively, get to know a practitioner in your area to whom you can confidently refer clients when the need arises; their loyalty to you will return ten-fold!

Acupressure can be used to treat many different health problems, for example allergies, muscular and skeletal problems, arthritis, asthma and breathing difficulties, cramps, spasms, earache, impotency and labour pains. However, we are going to concentrate on the acupressure points related to the skin, and areas that commonly affect the condition of the skin.

### **What is Acupressure?**

The origins of acupressure are as ancient as the instinctive impulse to hold your head or temples when you have a headache. Everyone at one time or another has used their hands spontaneously to hold or rub tense and painful places of the body.

Acupressure is an ancient healing art that uses fingers to press key points on the surface of the

skin to stimulate the body's natural healing abilities. When these points are pressed, they release muscular tension and promote increased circulation of the blood and lymphatic systems.

As with reflexology and aromatherapy, acupressure was conceived in Asian cultures using the knowledge and understanding of energy pathways in the body. The Chinese call this chi and the Japanese call it ki.

Stimulating these points with pressure, needles or heat triggers releases endorphins and neurochemicals that relieve pain. As a result, pain is blocked and the flow of blood and oxygen to the affected area is increased. This causes the muscles to relax and promotes healing. Because acupressure inhibits the pain signals sent to the brain, it has been described as closing the 'gates' of the pain-signalling system, preventing the painful sensations from passing through the spinal cord to the brain.

Besides relieving pain, acupressure can help rebalance the body by easing tensions and stresses (both of which inhibit the immune system) that keep it from functioning smoothly. Tension tends to concentrate around acupressure points. When a muscle is chronically tense or in spasm, the muscle fibres contract due to the production of lactic acid caused by fatigue, trauma, stress, chemical imbalances or poor circulation. For example, as detailed in the chapter on stress, the breathing of a stressed person may become shallow; certain acupressure points can relieve chest tension, enabling the stressed client to breathe deeply once more.