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health file

Special issue covers the resources and treatments available for **obese** patients in the Keys.

· Plus information about cardiac care, smile makeovers and fitness.

THE CITIZEN Press

Acupuncture can help with weighty issues

Special to The Citizen

Obesity is a condition that affects roughly one third of all Americans and the problem is on the up rise. Obesity is defined as being 30 percent over normal body weight. Lifestyle changes are inescapable in the treatment of obesity. However, acupuncture has been used to support permanent weight loss for many years.

"There are many components to obesity including genetics, education, lifestyle, emotional reaction to stress and imbalances in the bodies' organ systems," said Ashley Hoyt, an alternative medicine clinician and acupuncturist in Key West. "And the extra weight can create a vicious cycle that complicates the treatment of obesity."

health file

According to Hoyt, acupuncture works on many levels to turn around the contributing factors to obesity and it's negative side effects. Cravings can be signs of different underlying imbalances in the body.

"Acupuncture works to decrease cravings, decrease appetite, increase metabolism and even works to change brain chemistry that affects our survivalist nature," she said, adding that it can also increase endorphins, serotonin and dopamine levels to produce an overall better sense of well being and reverse the negative side effects of stress.

In the past, Hoyt has also used acupuncture to improve intestinal motility and water metabolism to aid in detoxing the body and addressing water weight.

Regardless of what prompts patients to visit the office, the process starts with a complete

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Acupuncture

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health history. Hoyt has spent her entire professional career in the health industry — first as a pre-med student with an interest in psychology, then a massage therapist and finally a doctor of acupuncture medicine, a four-year academic commitment. Patients are treated according to individualized plans that take into account his or her underlying pattern of imbalances and particular environmental challenges to promote health physically, mentally and emotionally.

"For patients who are receiving acupuncture to lose weight, I can also make other suggestions regarding their diet, exercise and stress management," Hoyt said. "Acupuncture combined with other behavior modifications — such as chewing on a flavored toothpick or exercising to combat agitation — can help my patients make great strides toward a healthy lifestyle."

Perhaps one of the most important functions of acupuncture, however, is its ability to promote healing. In much the same way a massage therapist's touch can remind a certain muscle to behave, acupuncture can stimulate the body's systems to work more efficiently to deal with the crisis du jour.

Hoyt is very emphatic that acupuncture and other alternative medicine is not an "either/or" proposition.

"Acupuncture works well with all modalities of medicine, including traditional medicines such as Western medicine," she said. "The great thing about acupuncture is that there are no negative side effects."

For more information about Ashley Hoyt and the Clinic of Alternative Medicine or to inquire about services, call 305-296-5358 or stop by 3420 Duck Avenue next to the Art Warehouse. The clinic is open business hours Monday through Friday and half day on Saturday.

www.keywestacupuncture.com