

## Acupuncture treatment for dry cough

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### Abstract

A cough is a natural reflex that helps clear the airways of mucus and irritants like dust or smoke. In most cases, it is not a symptom of a serious condition. A cough that does not produce mucus is referred to as a dry or "unproductive" cough. Nighttime coughing can make it harder to fall asleep and may negatively impact overall quality of life. Most dry coughs are caused by infections, such as the common cold or flu. From a Traditional Chinese Medicine perspective, nighttime coughing occurs when the lung qi is disrupted or out of balance. In this framework, the lungs regulate the movement of qi throughout the body, guiding both its upward and downward flow. When this balance is disturbed, coughing arises as a response to help restore proper function. A cough that intensifies during the night may suggest a Yin deficiency, a condition in which the body lacks sufficient cooling and moistening energy, resulting in dryness and irritation. In this research paper is about 73 years old women who suffer from dry night cough around 2 years. She has used Operil nasal drops and antibiotics as therapy. She also has a blood pressure problem for which she takes pills in the morning Coprenesa and Lapranil at night. The patient also experiences chronic fatigue, poor sleep, and sweating around the neck and chest during sleep. She came to our TCM center on March 27, 2026 and immediately after consulting with the doctors, she began acupuncture treatment. Treatments were performed once a week, and the doctors recommended that she should have a series of 5 to 10. The cough problem began to reduce after the third acupuncture session, and with it, sleep improved and fatigue slowly disappeared. Acupuncture is a good choice for treating a dry cough and always gives positive results.

**Key words:** dry cough, treatment, acupuncture, TCM

### Introduction

A cough is a natural reflex that helps clear the airways of mucus and irritants like dust or smoke. A cough that does not produce mucus is referred to as a dry or "unproductive" cough. Nighttime coughing can make it harder to fall asleep and may negatively impact overall quality of life. Most dry coughs are caused by infections, such as the common cold or flu.

There are a few causes of nighttime dry cough like: *viral infections* like the common cold and flu, *smoking*, *asthma* which is a disorder in which the airways become inflamed and constricted, leading to difficulty in breathing. Persistent coughing is one of its common

symptoms. *Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)* is a type of chronic acid reflux, it can also trigger cough reflex. *Postnasal drip*-It tends to occur more easily at night when you are lying down, as mucus can flow down the back of the throat, enter the airways, and activate the cough reflex. Less common causes of dry cough at night include: whooping cough, environmental irritants and angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors. [1]

Most dry coughs improve once the underlying cause is treated. A healthcare provider may listen to your heart and lungs and order a chest X-ray to help identify what is causing the cough. For coughs caused by allergies, past infections, or other mild conditions, home management options may include over-the-counter cough suppressants, staying well hydrated, using cough drops or hard candies, taking a spoonful of honey, and running a humidifier. [2]

## Case report

In this research paper is about 73 years old women who suffer from dry night cough around 2 years. She has used Operil nasal drops and antibiotics as therapy. She also has a blood pressure problem for which she takes pills in the morning Coprenesa and Lapranil at night. The patient also experiences chronic fatigue, poor sleep, and sweating around the neck and chest during sleep. She came to our TCM center on March 27, 2026 and immediately after consulting with the doctors, she began acupuncture treatment. Treatments were performed once a week, and the doctors recommended that she should have a series of 5 to 10. The cough problem began to reduce after the third acupuncture session, and with it, sleep improved and fatigue slowly disappeared.

The acupuncture treatments were made in an acupuncture clinic for acupuncture and TCM in Skopje, North Macedonia by a doctor specialist in acupuncture. Acupuncture treatments were with a duration of 30 minutes. Treatments were done indoors, on a room temperature, with normal (dry) acupuncture with fine sterile disposable needles sized 0.25x25mm. Acupuncture points used in the treatments were on the meridians: Li, ST, RM.

In recent years, the prevalence of cough has risen notably, largely due to changes in both environmental and social conditions. Cough remains one of the most frequently reported symptoms among patients in respiratory departments as well as in primary care settings. In China, the reported prevalence of chronic cough in adults ranges widely, from approximately 2.0% to 28.3%.

The diagnosis of chronic cough can be challenging because of its complex and multifactorial causes. In conventional Western medicine, treatment typically focuses on identifying the underlying cause alongside symptomatic relief, such as suppressing the cough reflex or promoting mucus clearance. Commonly prescribed medications include codeine, compound methoxamine capsules, and acetylcysteine.

Despite these treatment options, cough often persists as one of the most distressing and difficult symptoms for patients. It is characterized by frequent recurrence, prolonged duration, and resistance to treatment. These factors can significantly impair patients' quality of life, negatively affect their emotional well-being, and place a considerable burden on both healthcare systems and society as a whole.

Furthermore, Western medical approaches may have limitations, particularly in cases where patients exhibit normal lung imaging yet continue to experience frequent coughing episodes. In such situations, achieving satisfactory therapeutic outcomes can be difficult. In contrast, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), through its long historical development,

offers distinct theoretical frameworks and treatment strategies, which have demonstrated notable clinical effectiveness.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), certain forms of cough are attributed to external pathogenic factors, including Wind, Cold, Heat, and Dryness. These environmental influences can disrupt the normal function of the respiratory system, leading to the sudden onset of cough. The clinical presentation may vary depending on the specific pathogenic factor involved.

Several common patterns are recognized in TCM:

*Wind-Cold Cough:* This type typically presents with chills, sensitivity to cold, and the production of clear or white sputum. It is more likely to occur during colder seasons or in environments with prolonged exposure to cold air, such as air-conditioned spaces.

*Wind-Heat Cough:* Patients with this pattern often experience a sore throat, low-grade fever, and the production of thick or yellow sputum. It is frequently associated with exposure to warm or humid environmental conditions.

*Wind-Dryness Cough:* This form is characterized by a dry, irritating cough with minimal or no sputum production. It is commonly observed in conditions of low humidity or during periods of environmental dryness, such as in hazy or arid climates.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), cough may also arise from internal imbalances within the body. Unlike externally induced coughs, these conditions typically develop gradually and are more prone to becoming chronic. Such patterns are often associated with dysfunction of the Lung system, the accumulation of phlegm and Dampness, or deficiencies in Yin, all of which can impair the normal regulation of respiration and lead to persistent coughing.[4]

## Conclusion

Acupuncture treatment as a part of TCM, aimed to restore this balance and support the body's natural healing processes. The positive clinical outcome observed in this case suggests that acupuncture may serve as a beneficial complementary approach for managing chronic cough, particularly in patients who experience persistent symptoms despite conventional treatment.

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**Conflict of interest**

The author have declared that no competing interests exist.

**Acknowledgement**

None.

**Statement of Informed Consent**

Written informed consent was obtained from the patient for his anonymized Information to be published in this article