

Cellulitis – Current Management Approach Through Complementary and Alternative Medicine

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Letter to The Editor

Cellulitis is an inflammatory condition of sub-cutaneous connective tissue under the skin. Bacteria, most commonly *Streptococci* and *Staphylococci*, when they get beneath the skin tissue through possible cuts or bruises, play a big role in the pathogenesis of this condition [1,2]. Diagnosis is fairly straight forward based on the appearance of the skin. If untreated, cellulitis may be highly dangerous. Managing cellulitis with integrative and complementary medicine involves three areas of focus: Anti-inflammatory and antibacterial approaches; rejuvenating factors; and enhancing immunity. An integrated and multi-faceted treatment approach may be successful in restoring normal health in patients suffering from cellulitis.

There are currently no clinical studies done on any complementary and alternative medicines including plant products till date for the treatment of cellulitis. Physicians primarily treat cellulitis with the help of antibiotics that can work effectively against *Staphylococcus* and *Streptococcus* strains. It is recommended that Cellulitis should not be treated with complementary or alternative medicine alone. But this can be treated with a holistic approach combining both Western medicine and alternative therapies. Some of the selected complementary and alternative therapies for the treatment of cellulitis are mentioned below.

Ayurvedic therapies have shown to treat cellulitis with their diverse range of synergistic formulations. *Hydrastis canadensis* (Goldenseal root) together with *Ulmus fulva* (Slippery elm), when made into a paste and applied on the affected area twice a day, have shown to be effective in cellulitis. Goldenseal root has been proved to be a potent anti-inflammatory agent, whereas, slippery elm is reported to be an antiseptic agent [3]. Tea tree oil (*Melaleuca alternifolia*), turmeric paste (*Curcuma longa*) and honey are other topical preparations of significance which are widely used [4]. There are also reports published on thyme oil claiming its effectiveness in treating cellulitis [5]. Thyme oil is reported to have potent antifungal and antibacterial actions. Homeopathy offers cost-effective treatment options for cellulitis. Two formulations namely, Rhus toxicodendron and Mercurius are effectively used for the treatment of itchy cellulitis [6]. The primary mechanism of action of these homeopathic remedies is by acting as an antibacterial agent.

Cupping therapy is one of the oldest practiced treatment methods for cellulitis. By creating a partial vacuum above the scarified mark, blood is drawn from the cutane to the surface, which enables quicker healing of the infected skin and removal of toxins and microbes [7]. Apart from this, hyperbaric oxygen therapy is gaining much popularity in curing skin related ailments like cellulitis, dermatitis, abrasive wounds and inflammation of the skin [8].

Acupuncture and other traditional Chinese medicine therapies may also help with the treatment of cellulitis. But there are no scientific or clinical studies that have studied on their effectiveness on cellulitis [9].

Though physicians prescribe more of antibiotics for the treatment of cellulitis, a holistic approach can be highly effective in the clinical management of cellulitis.

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