

How ACUPRESSURE-MASSAGE eases CANCER TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS in dogs and cats

By Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis

If your dog or cat is receiving chemo or other cancer treatments, he may experience uncomfortable side effects such as gastrointestinal upset and fatigue. These acupressure-massage sessions can help ease his discomfort.

Cancer is an aggressive disease that often requires aggressive treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiation. Common side effects of these treatments in dogs and cats as well as humans include nausea and vomiting, possible appetite loss, diarrhea or constipation, and fatigue. The good news is that you can help your animal weather these side effects by giving him acupressure-massage.

What acupressure-massage can do

This modality is based on Traditional Chinese Medicine and has been used for centuries to help resolve gastrointestinal issues, enhance appetite, and deal with fatigue. The acupoints selected for the acupressure-massage sessions in this article are focused on alleviating the side effects from the treatments the animal is undergoing, without interfering with those treatments.

From a Chinese medicine perspective, different approaches are used depending on exactly what an individual dog or cat is experiencing. Though we can't address any one animal's indicators in this article, we can provide three general sessions to help with the gastrointestinal problems and low energy associated with cancer treatment, while providing important comfort.

It's important to understand that acupressure-massage cannot treat the cancer itself. Nevertheless, taking an integrative approach by adding the modality to your dog or cat's treatment regimen can benefit his condition.

3 acupressure-massage sessions for treatment side effects

1. For gastrointestinal issues

Signs of gastrointestinal (GI) discomfort include excessive drooling, eating grass, lip-sucking, regurgitating, and appetite loss. There are general acupoints that address GI upset. In TCM, the following acupoints are commonly selected:

- Stomach 36 – Master point for the GI tract
- Conception Vessel 12 – Regulates Stomach chi (life-promoting energy)
- Bladder 20 – Supports digestion

If your cat or dog has lost his appetite, add the classic point known as “Base of the Mountain.” This acupoint is located on the nose where the hair ends and the nose begins. Gently rub that little area. (see top right chart on opposite page)

2. For low energy

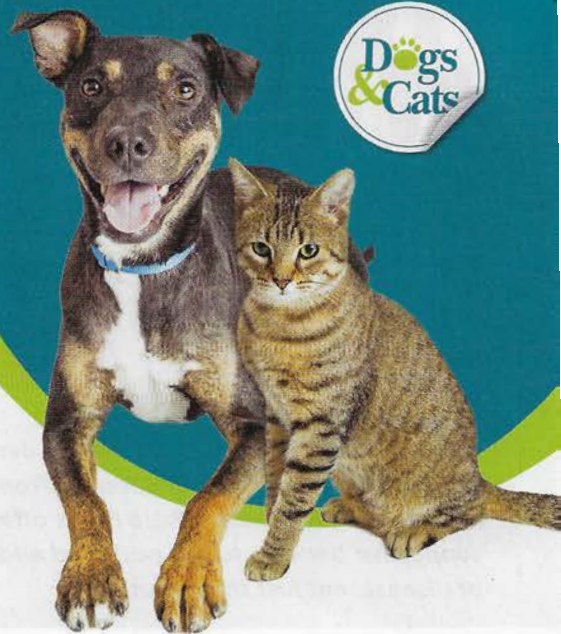
After a chemo treatment, fatigue and lethargy can set in. Your dog or cat may feel tired and heavy. He sleeps a lot and

is reluctant to do anything more than take care of his basic physical needs. This acupressure session enhances the flow of chi while providing the animal with the nourishing essence needed to increase energy. The acupoints presented in the chart are specifically selected to encourage the flow of chi and for supporting activity (see middle right chart on opposite page).

3. For comforting the animal

Physical depletion during the treatment process is only part of what you and your beloved four-legged companion are experiencing. There's also a whole emotional realm that you have entered together, and this part of the process can be devastating. This is when you can be an “emotional-support human” and bring comfort to your animal.

Specific techniques in acupressure-massage can physically and psychologically communicate a deep and soothing level of comfort to your animal. Before beginning your session, think about how much you love and care about your dog or cat. Your intention during this acupressure-massage session is to share how much you want him to heal. Your dog or cat will feel your intention and it will help him heal, physically and spiritually.



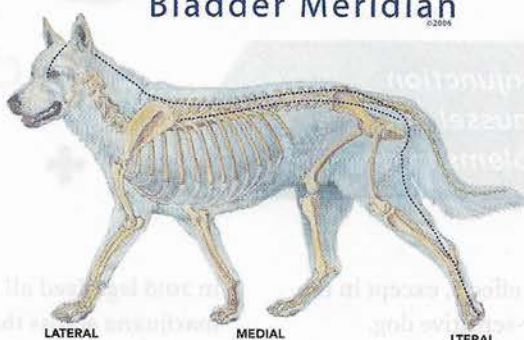
The chart at bottom right shows the Bladder Meridian, which is just off the animal's spine. Place the flat of your hand at about the middle of your dog or cat's neck and slowly stroke down, tracing the Bladder Meridian. For a small animal, use the two-finger technique (see sidebar below) to trace the meridian. Repeat this procedure three times on each side of your animal.

animals. Breathe together and quietly express how much you appreciate your animal's life.



Bladder Meridian

Once you have completed tracing the Bladder Meridian, gently rub or scratch the Bai Hui point located on the midline between the top of the hips. The Bai Hui point is known to be the "feel-good point" for most



POINT WORK TECHNIQUES - a refresher

Rest one hand on your dog or cat wherever it is comfortable. You are going to perform the actual point work with the other hand. Use either the thumb or two-finger technique.

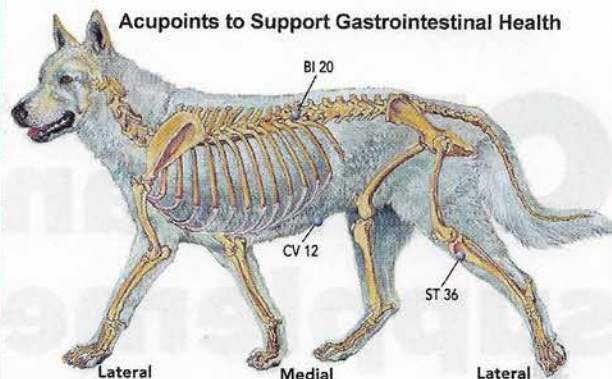
- **Thumb technique** (best suited for the animal's trunk): Place the tip of your thumb directly on the acupressure point at a 45° angle and hold the point gently, but with intent, for a slow count of 30.



- **Two-finger technique** (works well for small animals and along the limbs): Put your middle finger on top of your index finger, and then gently but with intentional firmness, place your index finger at a 45° angle on the acupressure point, again for a slow count of 30.

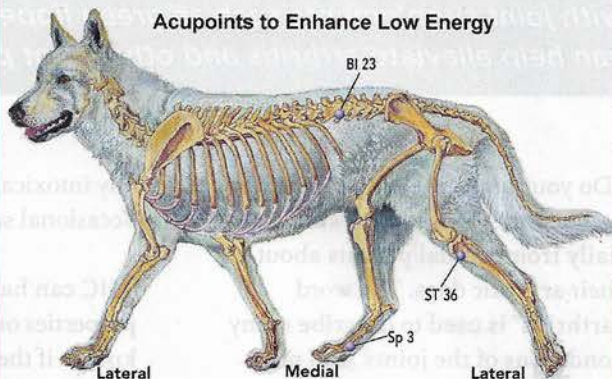


Acupoints to Support Gastrointestinal Health



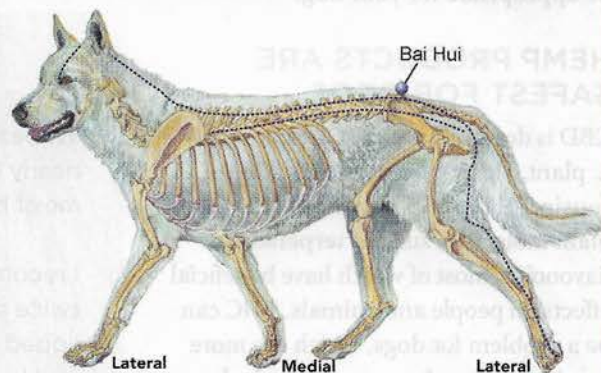
Points	Location
St 36	Found one finger-breadth lateral to the tibial crest.
BI 20	1.5 cun lateral to the caudal border of the dorsal spinous process of the 12 th thoracic vertebra.
CV 12	Located on the ventral midline halfway between the xiphoid process and umbilicus, 4 cun cranial to the umbilicus

Acupoints to Enhance Low Energy



Points	Location
St 36	Found one finger-breadth lateral to the tibial crest.
Sp 3	Found at the mid-point of the medial aspect of the 2 nd metatarsal bone.
BI 23	1.5 cun lateral to the caudal border of the dorsal spinous process of the 2 nd lumbar vertebra.

Comforting Acupressure-Massage Session



Points	Location
Bai Hui	Found on the dorsal midline at the lumbo-sacral space.