

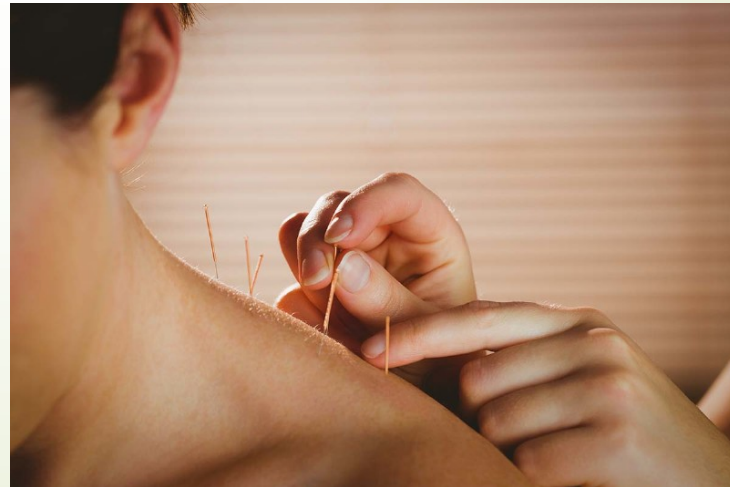
What is Acupuncture and How Does it Work?

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What is Acupuncture?

- Acupuncture, a form of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), is a lot more than needles. We treat holistically with herbs, bodywork therapies, and more.
- But the core practice is the use of unbelievably thin and painless needles to treat all forms of bodily imbalances, to relieve pain, and even to treat the mind, such as for anxiety and sleep issues.



How does acupuncture work?

- ▶ Acupuncture works by improving the body's natural functions and promoting a process of self-healing. This is done by stimulating acupuncture points, which are otherwise known as acupoints.
- ▶ In Traditional Chinese Medicine, acupuncture is believed to work by balancing the two energies in the body, the yin and the yang. When these are balanced, the body is healthy.
- ▶ However, the flow of energy (the qi) can become blocked, which leads to health conditions such as pain or illness. Acupuncture is used to release the blockage and stimulate the body's natural healing response.




The Qi



- ▶ The qi is the common thread among various types of Traditional Chinese Medicine. It refers to the energy in the body. The qi embraces all of the body's energy, from physical energy, to mental energy that comes with thoughts and emotions.
- ▶ Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners believe that a person is happy and healthy when their qi is dynamic, harmonious, and balanced.
- ▶ Qi is thought to flow throughout the body in a similar manner to how water flows through rivers. The rivers in the body are referred to as meridians, or the meridian channels.
- ▶ Certain areas of the body are known to collect qi, which results in an acupuncture point. This is where a Chinese acupuncturist accesses and manipulates qi in order to restore balance.






What should you expect from an acupuncture treatment?


there are a few things to keep in mind **prior** to your first acupuncture appointment.

- ▶ Wear clothing that allows for easy access of the lower arms and legs.
- ▶ Do not arrive with either a noticeably full or empty stomach.
- ▶ Make sure your practitioner knows this is your first time receiving an acupuncture treatment.




What should you expect from an acupuncture treatment?

- ▶ During your first consultation, your acupuncturist will get a thorough understanding of your primary health concern as well as your overall health and lifestyle.
- ▶ This will involve a verbal conversation about your symptoms, your medical history, your sleeping patterns, your emotional well-being, and your appetite and digestion. Women will be asked about past pregnancies and their menstrual cycle as well.
- ▶ While some questions may seem unrelated to your primary health concern, the information you provide will help your practitioner form a picture of your overall health. Your practitioner will also find your pulse, and may look at your tongue.
- ▶ With this assessment, the acupuncturist can recommend a personalized treatment plan to address your health concerns. This plan may include dietary and lifestyle changes in addition to the acupuncture treatment.



What should you expect from an acupuncture treatment?


- ▶ To start an acupuncture treatment, you will be asked to lie comfortably on a treatment table. The acupuncturist will then stimulate precise acupuncture points on various parts of your body.
- ▶ While the idea of sticking needles in your skin throughout your body may sound uncomfortable, most people feel very little, if any, discomfort during this process.
- ▶ The needles are typically kept in the skin for anywhere from five to 30 minutes. During the treatment, and certainly afterward, people say they feel very relaxed.



What does science say about the effectiveness of acupuncture?


According to the National Institutes of Health, results from studies show that acupuncture can help relieve common and chronic pain such as:

- ▶ Tension headaches
- ▶ Migraine headaches
- ▶ Lower back pain
- ▶ Neck pain
- ▶ Knee pain



What do the National Institutes of Health say about the safety of acupuncture?

- ▶ The National Institutes of Health reports that very few complications have been reported from using acupuncture.
- ▶ However, there have been complications from the use of nonsterile needles during acupuncture and improper delivery of acupuncture treatments.
- ▶ When acupuncture is done incorrectly, it can result in serious adverse effects, including punctured organs, infections, collapsed lungs, and central nervous system injury.
- ▶ The U.S. FDA regulates the use of acupuncture needles as medical devices, and are therefore only to be used by licensed practitioners.
- ▶ The FDA requires that needles are labeled and manufactured according to strict standards. The FDA also requires acupuncture needles to be sterile, labeled for single use, nontoxic.



What are the different forms of acupuncture?

Different styles of acupuncture have developed over time based on different opinions having to do with technique and theory. The basic theoretical principles of acupuncture are the same, but different styles use very different techniques. There is currently no evidence that one style is more or less effective than another.

Traditional Chinese Acupuncture

- ▶ Most common form practiced in the U.S.
- ▶ Focus is to promote balance in the body
- ▶ Holds that balance results in optimal functioning of one's whole self

Japanese Style Acupuncture

- ▶ More subtle than Traditional Chinese Acupuncture
- ▶ Fewer and thinner needles than Traditional Chinese Acupuncture

What are the different forms of acupuncture?

Korean Acupuncture

- ▶ Shares the Classical approach of the Japanese style
- ▶ Uses more needles than Japanese style

Korean Hand Acupuncture

- ▶ Uses a microsystem category of acupuncture
- ▶ Focuses only on the hand to treat the whole body

Auricular Acupuncture

- ▶ Uses a microsystem category of acupuncture
- ▶ Uses only acupoints in the ear
- ▶ Commonly used for pain management as well as drug, alcohol, and nicotine addictions

Forms of acupressure that may or may not involve needles

Tui Na

- ▶ Tui Na is a Chinese method of medical massage. This therapy uses specific massage techniques to help balance the body's energies and the flow of qi through the body's meridians.
- ▶ During Tui Na, the practitioner will use a range of techniques depending on your personal needs. Some techniques include massaging soft tissue, applying acupressure or herbal compresses, ointments, liniments, or heat.
- ▶ Like acupuncture, Tui Na is meant to result in pain relief, stress reduction, or provided as a specific treatment.



Forms of acupressure that may or may not involve needles

Cupping

- ▶ Cupping is administered using glass cups in a variety of sizes.
- ▶ A cupping practitioner puts heat in a cup before applying the cup to the patient's back. The heat in the cup acts as a vacuum and pulls the skin upwards into the cup. This causes fresh blood to be released to the area which can help get rid of toxins, apply acupoint stimulation, improve the circulation of the blood and lymph, relax tight muscles, and reduce inflammation.
- ▶ Noticeable bruise marks show on the skin following cupping therapy. Although the bruise marks are not attractive, they are not painful and will disappear within a week.
- ▶ Cupping is typically used for various types of pains, including lower back and leg pain, shoulder and neck tension, and to treat symptoms of fibromyalgia. Cupping can also help to open up the chest, which results in benefits to the lungs that can relieve respiratory issues such as asthma, a cough, and bronchitis.



Forms of acupressure that may or may not involve needles



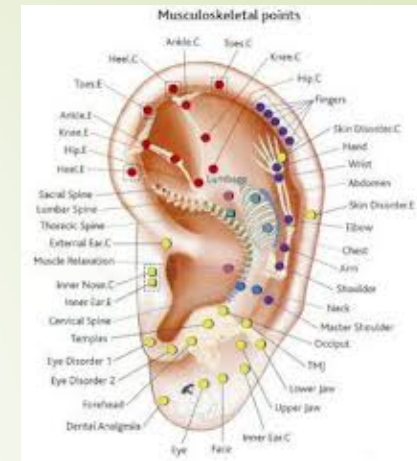
Gua Sha

- Gua sha is the practice of using a tool to apply pressure and scrape the skin to relieve pain and tension. This action causes light bruising, which often appears as purple or red spots known as petechiae or sha.
- The name gua sha — comes from the Chinese word for scraping. It may also be called skin scraping, spooning, or coining.
- Gua sha aims to move blocked energy to relieve aches or stiffness.
- Traditional Chinese Medicine also views blood stasis or stagnation as a cause of pain and illness. Another aim of gua sha is to move pooled or stagnated blood to relieve symptoms.
- Gua sha is generally performed on a person's back, buttocks, neck, arms, and legs. Treatment is not supposed to be painful.

Forms of acupressure that may or may not

Auricular Acupuncture

- Performed on the ears, this is most often used for treating addictions and weight loss.
- Acupoints on the ear are stimulated with tiny seeds that do not pierce the skin and are painless when applied. The patient leaves the seeds on their ears for up to a week and stimulates the points on their own by massaging the points several times throughout the day.
- With over 200 acupoints on each ear representing different parts and functions of the body, a trained practitioner can use this to treat many ailments, as well as use them in diagnosing the patient.



Forms of acupressure that may or may not involve needles



Moxibustion

- Moxibustion is the practice of burning moxa, which is an herbal wool, over specific acupoints. The burned moxa is simply placed on the tip of a needle, or made into a stick that can be waved over the skin in sliding motions.
- The radiant heat that is produced by moxibustion restores balance, promotes circulation, and reduces pain by penetrating deeply into the body.
- Moxibustion is used to improve general health and to treat chronic conditions such as pain, arthritis, infertility, digestive disorders, and ulcers, to name a few.

Forms of acupressure that may or may not involve needles



Electroacupuncture

- Electroacupuncture is quite similar to traditional acupuncture in that the same points are stimulated during treatment.
- The needles are then attached to a device that generates continuous electric pulses using small clips.
- These devices are used to adjust the frequency and intensity of the impulse being delivered, depending on the condition being treated.
- Electroacupuncture uses two needles at time so that the impulses can pass from one needle to the other.
- Several pairs of needles can be stimulated simultaneously, usually for no more than 30 minutes at a time.
- Electroacupuncture is considered to be especially useful for conditions in which there is an accumulation of *qi*, such as in chronic pain syndromes, or in cases where the *qi* is difficult to stimulate.
- Patients may experience a tingling sensation while being treated with electroacupuncture, which is most likely due to the electric current. In most cases, the tingling sensation will not be felt.

Forms of acupressure that may or may not involve needles



Bloodletting

- ▶ Bloodletting in Chinese medicine was limited to a small needle stick, where drops of blood were allowed to seep until the blood color changed from dark to light (typically three to five drops), indicating that the pathogen residing in and congesting the blood was evacuated
- ▶ The most common acupuncture points to bleed are those with shallow insertion depths, such as ear acupuncture points, scalp points and *jing* (well) points. Other points that can be bled are those with energetics that lend themselves to bleeding, such as BL 40 (*weizhong*), to release summer heat; the ear apex point for acute conjunctivitis; or local points for pathologies such as bruises or varicosities.
- ▶ Bleeding is a specialized technique for specific conditions that can produce effective and dramatic results when the patient's condition is diagnosed properly and the bleeding method expertly executed.



Acupuncture – A Holistic Approach

- ▶ Acupuncture is more than poking people with needles. It is an integrated, holistic system of diagnosing and treating the body.
- ▶ And acupuncture itself is part of a larger system of Chinese Medicine.
- ▶ For example, I will often use acupuncture in conjunction with bodywork, Moxibustion, Cupping, Gua Sha, Bloodletting and Chinese herbs.
- ▶ It's not a single treatment for a single condition. It is a full approach to maximal health throughout the body.