

Questions & Answers About Acupuncture

Q: What is acupuncture?

A: Acupuncture is the insertion of fine needles into the body at specific points shown as effective in the treatment of specific health problems. These points have been mapped by the Chinese over a period of several thousand years. Recently, electromagnetic research has confirmed their locations.

Q: What problems can be treated by acupuncture?

A: The World Health Organization has said that acupuncture is suitable for treating the following:

1. Ear, Nose, and Throat Disorders: Toothaches, pain after extraction, earaches, sinus inflammation, nasal inflammation.
2. Respiratory Disorders: Uncomplicated bronchial asthma in children or adults.
3. Gastrointestinal Disorders: Digestive tract problems, hiccups, inflammation of the stomach, chronic duodenal ulcers, inflammation of the colon, constipation, diarrhea, and dysentery caused by certain bacteria.
4. Eye Disorders: Inflammation of the conjunctiva, inflammation of the central retina, nearsightedness (in children), and uncomplicated cataracts.
5. Nervous System and Muscular Disorders: Headaches, migraines, certain facial paralysis or nerve pain, partial weakness after a stroke, inflammation of the nerve endings, bed wetting, frozen shoulder, tennis elbow, sciatica, low back pain, and osteoarthritis.

Acupuncture has been used for centuries in China to treat many other problems, such as knee pain, sprains and strains, and most gynecological complaints.

Q: How deep do the needles go?

A: That depends upon the nature of the problem, the location of the points selected, the patient's size, age, overall constitution, and upon the acupuncturist's style or school. Usually, needles are inserted from 1/8 to 1 inch in depth.

Q: Does it hurt?

A: If your practitioner has obtained the correct stimulus through the needle, the patient should feel some tightening, heaviness, distention, tingling, or electric sensation near the needle or traveling up or down the selected meridian, or energy pathway. In Chinese, acupuncture is *bu tong*, or painless. Some Western cultures may categorize these sensations as types of pain. In any case, if you experience any discomfort, it is usually brief and mild.

Q: Are the needles clean?

A: The best practice among acupuncturists in America today is to use sterile, individually packaged, disposable needles. This eliminates the possibility of transmitting a communicable disease or an infection by a contaminated needle.

Q: How does acupuncture work?

A: Modern Western medicine cannot explain fully how acupuncture works. Traditional acupuncture is based on ancient Chinese theories of the flow of Qi (energy) and Xue (blood) through distinct meridians or pathways that cover the body somewhat like the nerves and blood vessels do.

According to ancient theory, acupuncture allows Qi to flow to areas where it is Deficient and away from where it is in Excess. In this way, acupuncture regulates and restores the harmonious energetic balance of the body. In Chinese there is a saying,

There is no pain if there is free flow;
If there is pain, there is no free flow.

Q: Are there different styles of acupuncture?

A: Yes, there are. Acupuncture originated in China but has spread to Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Europe, the British Isles, America, Canada, and many other countries. Different styles have developed in the various countries based on differing opinions as to theory and technique. Patients should talk to their practitioners about their particular style and learn as much as possible about the treatment being proposed.

Q: What criteria should one use choosing an acupuncturist?

A: Patients should ask about where the practitioner trained, how long the training was, how long he or she has been in practice, and what experience the practitioner has had in treating the patient's specific ailment.

Acupuncture is a licensed and regulated health-care profession in about half the states in the U.S. Ask your practitioner if your state requires a license to practice. In states that do not currently require licensing, patients should ask their practitioner if they have passed national boards or international testing. Those who have passed testing are entitled to add Dipl.Ac. (Diplomate of Acupuncture) after their name.

Q: How many treatments will I need?

A: That depends upon the duration, severity, and nature of your complaint. You may need only a single treatment for an acute condition. A series of five to fifteen treatments may resolve many chronic conditions. Some degenerative conditions may require many treatments over time.

Q: What should I know about the proposed treatments?

A: Your practitioner will explain the nature of your problem and what treatment he or she is recommending. Your practitioner will tell you what benefits and risks there are to the proposed treatment, and what other treatment options are available to you through this practitioner or through referral to another practitioner or physician. If you agree to go ahead with the plan, your acupuncturist will tell you what progress to expect, what to do if you temporarily feel worse.

Q: Is there anything I need to do before receiving an acupuncture treatment?

A: It is always good practice to maintain good personal hygiene to reduce the possibility of bacterial infection. To prevent loss, do not wear jewelry. If you wear jewelry, remove it for the duration of the session and replace at the end of the sessions, as metal objects that circle the body disrupt the energy flow. Wear loose clothing. In many cases, gowns are provided for female clients. Avoid tight stockings or plan to remove them. Avoid treatment when you are excessively fatigued, hungry, full, emotionally upset, with a hangover, or after a night of insomnia.

Q: Is there anything I need to do while receiving Acupuncture?

A: Yes, there is – *Relax*. Ask your acupuncturist any questions you have along the way so that you can get the most benefit possible from your session. Do not change position or move suddenly. If you are uncomfortable, tell your practitioner. A few people may experience dizziness, nausea, cold sweat, shortness of breath, or faintness during treatment. This occurs more often if you are

nervous. If you inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, a calm can be maintained through the session. Always communicate with your practitioner about any changes that involve your comfort.

Q: What can I expect after treatment?

A: You may note a microscopic dot of blood at one or more of the acupuncture sites. Sometimes a small bruise will appear under the skin. These should not be harmful, but please talk to your practitioner if you are concerned.

Patients often experience dramatic results in the first treatment. Some patients experience an immediate total or partial relief of their pain or other symptoms. This relief may last or some pain may return. In a few cases, there may be no initial relief, with pain diminishing over the next few days. Generally, you should expect to feel better.

Most patients will have more questions than this brochure can answer. Your acupuncturist is accustomed to answering questions such as:

- Should I continue to see my medical doctor?
- Should I continue to take my present medication?
- What should I eat?
- Is there anything I can do for myself at home?
- What signs of success should I look for first, and after how long?

You should discuss all of your questions in person with your acupuncturist.

Acupuncture Works!

This informational pamphlet is provided to you by the

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