

Acupuncture Information

TCM Anti-Cancer Centre
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Acupuncture

Acupuncture is one of the oldest, most commonly used medical procedures in the world. Originating in China more than 2,000 years ago, acupuncture became widely known in the United States in 1971 when *New York Times* reporter James Reston wrote about how doctors in Beijing, China, used needles to ease his abdominal pain after surgery. Research shows that acupuncture is beneficial in treating a variety of health conditions.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has funded a variety of research projects on acupuncture that have been awarded by its National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institute of Dental Research, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, and National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Acupuncture Theories

Traditional Chinese medicine theorizes that the more than 2,000 acupuncture points on the human body connect with 12 main and eight secondary pathways, called [meridians](#). Chinese medicine practitioners believe these meridians conduct energy, or [qi](#), between the surface of the body and internal organs.

Qi regulates spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical balance. Qi is influenced by the opposing forces of [yin](#) and [yang](#). According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, when yin and yang are balanced, they work together with the natural flow of qi to help the body achieve and maintain health. Acupuncture is believed to balance yin and yang, keep the normal flow of energy unblocked, and restore health to the body and mind.

Traditional Chinese Medicine practices (including acupuncture, herbs, diet, massage, and meditative physical exercises) all are intended to improve the flow of qi.

Mechanisms of Action

1. Several processes have been proposed to explain acupuncture's effects, primarily those on pain. Acupuncture points are believed to stimulate the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord) to release chemicals into the muscles, spinal cord, and brain. These chemicals either change the experience of pain or release other chemicals, such as hormones, that influence the body's self-regulating systems. The biochemical changes may stimulate the body's natural healing abilities and promote physical and emotional well being.

Clinical Studies

According to an NIH consensus panel of scientists, researchers, and practitioners who convened in November 1997, clinical studies have shown that acupuncture is an effective treatment for nausea caused by surgical anesthesia and Cancer chemotherapy as well as for dental pain experienced after surgery. The panel also found that acupuncture is useful by itself or combined with conventional therapies to treat addiction, headaches, menstrual cramps, tennis elbow, [fibromyalgia](#), myofascial pain, osteoarthritis, lower back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and asthma; and to assist in stroke rehabilitation.

What are the Needles Like?

Acupuncture needles have a coiled handle and an extremely fine shaft with a sharp point. The needles are solid and no substances are injected into the body. Needles come in different lengths and thicknesses according to the area of the body which is to be treated. The majority of practitioners use pre-packed and sterilized disposable needles that are used only once.

What Happens During Treatment and How Many Treatments do I need?

Treatment protocols, frequency and duration are a matter of professional judgment for the practitioner, in consultation with the patient. During a treatment, the practitioner selects appropriate points for their specific actions in relationship to the identified disharmony. The points are then needled and the needles may or may not be subsequently manipulated, either manually, or with a small electrical device, to achieve certain effects. The needles are usually retained in the body for approximately 15 to 30 minutes. A common course of treatment may initially involve 10-15 treatments, once every second or third day, but may be more or less frequent depending on the condition of the disorder. Multiple courses of treatment may sometimes be required.

Conditions Appropriate for Acupuncture Therapy

Digestive Abdominal pain Constipation Diarrhea Hyperacidity Indigestion	Anxiety Depression Insomnia Nervousness Neurosis	Eye-Ear-Nose-Throat Cataracts Gingivitis Poor vision Tinnitus Toothache	Gynecological Infertility Menopausal symptoms Premenstrual syndrome
Miscellaneous Addiction control Athletic performance Blood pressure regulation Chronic fatigue Immune system tonification Stress reduction	Musculoskeletal Arthritis Back pain Muscle cramping Muscle pain/weakness Neck pain Sciatica	<u>Neurological</u> Headaches Migraines Neurogenic bladder dysfunction Parkinson's disease Postoperative pain Stroke	Respiratory Asthma Bronchitis Common cold Sinusitis Smoking cessation Tonsillitis