

Supporting Wellness With Acupuncture

What is Acupuncture?

The word acupuncture is a compound word formed from “acu” meaning having to do with a needle or needle-related, and “puncture” meaning to pierce or penetrate. Present-day acupuncture involves the insertion of thin, sterilized, single-use needles through the skin at strategic points on the body to various depths. Acupuncture is most commonly used to treat pain. Increasingly, it is being used for overall wellness, including stress management.

Acupuncture is a prime component of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). It sometimes is categorized as alternative medicine or complementary medicine; however, it still is practiced as mainstream medicine in some Eastern cultures.

Origins of Acupuncture

Acupuncture was first practiced during the Stone Age. Within that period, sharp-edged tools and stones were used to puncture the skin to drain abscesses. Acupuncture was first recorded in the ancient Chinese medical text Huang Di Nei Jing (The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine), said to be written or compiled by Emperor Huang Di.

The basis of modern acupuncture was established during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) with the publication of The Great Compendium of Acupuncture and Moxibustion. Acupuncture has been used in the West since the 17th century, recorded first in Europe in 1810.

How It Works

There are two (2) schools of thought that explain how acupuncture creates wellness.

1. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)
2. Western Medicine

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)

Curran (2008) discusses that the basis of TCM is Taoist philosophy. The key to a long healthy life is to follow the Tao, the natural way of the universe. Illness is caused by an imbalance of the two primary forces, yin and yang, and by the influence of the five elements (water, fire, metal, wood, and earth) on the organs of the body. “Qi” pronounced “chi” is the energy flow or life-force that flows through meridians, or pathways, in the human body. These meridians are accessible through 350 acupuncture points in the body; however, they are prone to blockages. When the meridians are blocked, they cause an imbalance in the flow of qi, and we become unwell. By inserting needles into these points with appropriate combinations, acupuncture practitioners are able to clear the blockages allowing qi to flow once more, creating balance and wellness.

Western Medicine

In contrast to TCM, some Western experts have used neuroscience to explain acupuncture. Acupuncture points are seen as places where nerves, muscles, and connective tissues can be stimulated. The stimulation increases blood flow while triggering the activity of the body’s natural painkillers simultaneously.

The Treatment Process

Before starting an acupuncture treatment, you should consult your doctor.

An acupuncturist should assess the overall health of the patient, including a physical examination. They may recommend self-care or other complementary therapies, such as moxibustion.

The patient is appropriately positioned, usually lying down. The acupuncturist will then insert single-use, disposable, sterile needles into the patient’s body. As each needle is inserted, the patient may feel a very brief stinging or tingling sensation. Acupuncture is usually relatively painless. The needles may be heated or stimulated with electricity after insertion. The needles will stay in for between 5 and 30 minutes.

The number of treatments needed depends on the individual. A person with a chronic condition may need one to two treatments a week over several months. An acute problem typically improves after 8 to 12 sessions.

Acupuncture Benefits

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), acupuncture is used as complementary medicine in the treatment of lung cancer. It is used mainly to relieve discomfort associated with a variety of diseases and conditions, including:

- Chemotherapy-induced and postoperative nausea and vomiting
- Dental pain
- Headaches, including tension headaches and migraines
- Labor pain
- Low back pain
- Neck pain
- Osteoarthritis
- Menstrual cramps
- Respiratory disorders, such as allergic rhinitis

Acupuncture is also helpful with stress relief or just for relaxation purposes.

Conclusion

Acupuncture has been around for as long as man. It has proved safe and effective in the treatment of pain, stress, and a range of other health issues. Acupuncture works symbiotically with Western medicine to provide relief for patients. It is safe, almost pain-free, and acupuncturists are often able to blend aspects of Eastern and Western methods into the treatment. If you are suffering from pain or stress, then acupuncture could make a difference in

your quality of life. Regardless of your health status, every person should add acupuncture to their bucket list, if only for the relaxation it will afford you.

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