



The Center for Integrative Medicine

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What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a treatment based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). This is a system of healing that dates back thousands of years. TCM believes that a type of life force, or energy, known as Qi (pronounced “chee”) flows through channels in the body called meridians. Each meridian connects to one specific organ, or group of organs, that governs particular bodily functions. The Qi, in turn, depends on a balance of the two opposing energies of yin (negative, dark, feminine) and yang (positive, bright, masculine). Illness results when too little or too much Qi exists in a meridian or when the Qi stagnates or is blocked. Stimulating certain points with fine needles can balance and restore the flow of Qi.

Western researchers have found that the Acupuncture points correspond to points on the skin that have less electrical resistance than other skin areas. There is some evidence that stimulation of the skin can affect internal organs by means of nerve reflex pathways (autonomic nervous system). One theory is that Acupuncture stimulates the release of natural pain-relieving chemicals called endorphins. Another theory is that it stimulates the pituitary gland, which in turn stimulates the adrenal gland to release anti-inflammatory chemicals.

What Happens During an Acupuncture Treatment?

Most practitioners of Acupuncture perform a partial physical examination during each visit. This includes extensive pulse taking, tongue observation, and feeling of the abdomen. They also will take a detailed medical history including nutrition habits, lifestyle and other environmental factors. After conducting the overall health evaluation, the Acupuncturist will ask you to lie down on a padded table. He or she will then insert the needles into your body at specific points (acupoints), including the ear and head. After insertion, the needles may be manipulated manually. The needles also may be connected to a safe electrical current, which may cause no sensation at all, or a mild tingling. Acupuncturists may also prescribe Chinese herbal preparations, diet, or Chinese massage (see Tui Na information sheet), along with acupuncture.

Is Acupuncture Safe?

In general, Acupuncture is safe and painless. Acupuncture needles are specially designed, hair-thin needles that come in different sizes. By law, we use sterilized, disposable, and individually packaged needles that are only used one time and we also wipe the skin with an alcohol pad. This eliminates the possibility of transmitting a communicable disease by a contaminated needle and reduces the chance of a local skin infection. After a needle penetrates the skin, the patient should feel some heaviness, distention, tingling, or electric sensation either around the needle or traveling up/down the affected channels.

Possible Side Affects:

- ◆ Mild discomfort and slight bruising at the needle sites
- ◆ Local spot bleeding (which may be more likely if you are taking a blood thinner or have a history of easy bleeding) or infection
- ◆ Fainting
- ◆ Needles may become lodged in the skin

Acupuncture





What Conditions Can Be Treated by Acupuncture?

Acupuncture has been proven effective for pain relief and for post-surgery and chemotherapy-related nausea and vomiting. Additionally, both the World Health Organization and the National Institutes of Health recognize that Acupuncture can be a helpful part of treatment plan for many illnesses and conditions. A partial list includes: addiction, asthma, bronchitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, constipation, diarrhea, headaches, menstrual cramps, osteoarthritis, sinusitis, stroke rehabilitation, and digestive disorders.

How Many Treatments Will I Need?

Your practitioner will explain the nature of your program and what treatment he/she is recommending. How long you need therapy depends on your condition. Acute or temporary problems may just need a few treatments. Chronic conditions may need regularly scheduled treatments over several months. You may start out with several treatments per week, then decrease to weekly or less often. Typically, you should allow 30-45 minutes per session. The initial visit can range anywhere from 60-90 minutes.

Are There Any Special Considerations I Should be Aware of for My Treatment?

1. Wear loose clothing
2. Avoid treatment when excessively fatigued, hungry, full, or shortly after sex
3. Maintain good personal hygiene to reduce the possibility of bacterial infection
4. Do not change your position or move suddenly
5. Try to relax during treatment



Notify your Practitioner Immediately if You:

- ◆ **Have a Pacemaker – Please inform your Acupuncturist prior to treatment**
- ◆ Are taking a blood thinner
- ◆ Are pregnant
- ◆ Experience dizziness, nausea, cold sweats, and shortness of breath, fainting, or sharp pain during treatment. Nervousness or being tense may trigger some of these symptoms
- ◆ Are uncomfortable in any way
- ◆ Feel an increasing amount of pain or burning sensation during the treatment

How Much Does Acupuncture Cost?

The cost of the therapy varies depending on the duration of the visit and whether or not you are an existing client at The Center for Integrative Medicine. Typically, initial visits range from \$85.00 - \$110.00 and return visits are \$65.00. Most insurance companies do not cover Acupuncture. Please check with your insurance company first to find out if Acupuncture might be covered.

How Do I Schedule an Appointment?

To make an appointment, call the Wellness Concierge at The Center for Integrative Medicine, University of Colorado Hospital, 720-848-1090, Monday – Friday, 8:00a.m. – 5:00p.m.

By making this information available, neither University of Colorado Hospital nor The Center for Integrative Medicine makes any recommendations, promises, or guarantees the effectiveness of this integrative therapy. For any serious conditions, we recommend that you contact your physician before trying any new therapy.

