



Acupuncture and You
Common Questions, Great Treatment!
An Introduction to Traditional Chinese Medicine

Natural Relief for Human Suffering

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Common Questions, Great Treatment!

An Introduction to Traditional Chinese Medicine for Phoenix, Az Residents

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is essentially a method to rebalance disharmonies within the body. Acupuncture is an ancient art of utilizing very thin needles in specific locations called acu-points to address symptomatic concerns and the underlying constitutional reason for the symptom. There are 365 major acu-points located along 12 regular and 6 extra energy lines called meridians. These lines do not correspond to any “western” anatomical structure. You may think of these energy lines as rivers of energy. Each of the 12 meridians corresponds to a Yin or Yang organ within the body. Whenever one of these rivers is stagnant or becomes blocked, a corresponding organ can be affected. Transversely, a disharmony in an organ can manifest itself in a meridian. Thus, acupuncture is one of the therapeutic modalities that can be utilized to move the blocked or stagnant Qi, thereby reactivating the body’s inherent ability to heal itself. Other modalities used to balance Qi and open meridians consist of herbal formulation (for your specific constitution), lifestyle consulting, food therapy, energy exercises, and massage techniques.

How does acupuncture work?

There are a number of views regarding how acupuncture works and numerous research articles written on the topic. One western medical theory is that the needles stimulate the release of endorphins (feel good hormones) thereby decreasing pain stimuli response. It may also alter the body's output of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and norepinephrine, and of inflammation-causing substances such as prostaglandins.

In addition, nerve stimulation is seen as one of the reasons for acupuncture efficacy. Basically, if a portion of the nervous system is over stimulated certain nerve fibers begin to “shut down” thereby reducing the ability to perceive pain.

From an eastern standpoint, the acupuncture needles elicit an activation of Qi thereby allowing the body to re-harmonize itself. Research published in “Human Brain Mapping,” unequivocally indicates acupuncture goes far beyond endorphins and confirms its re-harmonizing aspect. With the use of nuclear magnetic resonance imaging, it appears the limbic system of the brain is affected by acupuncture. The amygdala, or the “seat of emotions” shows signal decreases with acupuncture manipulation. Since this portion of the brain is activated by fear, anger, sadness, pain, etc., the signal decreases indicate acupuncture helps calm and modulate the brain.

Are there different styles of acupuncture?

Yes. Chinese, Japanese (Kampo or Kanpo), French-Auricular, Scalp, Five Element, & Master Tung’s, are some of the styles of acupuncture.

What is Qi? (Pronounced Chee)

Roughly stated, Qi is energy. However, Qi is all around you. Qi is the air you breathe, food you eat, water you drink and the energy you get from your parents at conception. Qi is what you feel when the sun's rays caress your face; it's the ATP mitochondria produce in your body. Imagine a flowing river. Qi is the river's movement. If something impedes the flow of water stagnation occurs and the water begins to rise and may move past the obstacle, but with concerted effort or at a reduced level of flow and force, thereby preventing the river from nourishing the area dependant on its flow. Surrounding fauna and animals will not receive proper nourishment thereby affecting an entire mini ecosystem. Your body is a mini ecosystem. When there is blockage in an artery, for example, the flow to the heart is decreased. When the blockage becomes severe enough, the heart will fail to obtain the much-needed oxygen and other nutrients vital to its functioning leading to cardiac infarction (heart attack), necrosis of the surrounding tissues or even cardiac tamponade. Qi is life energy itself. If Qi is blocked, slowed, or any change occurs in its cycle, an imbalance occurs. Thus, the health of Qi influences the body's state of health and balance.

What is Yin and Yang? (Pronounced Yen and Yaung)

You can simply view yin and yang as cold or hot, wet or dry, night or day. Yin and Yang are the masculine and feminine aspects of Qi—complementary opposites. Cold is no more desirable than heat, rain no more than sun, day no more than night. They function together like the seasons of the year. Since yin and yang are components of Qi, it is only natural that if yin or yang is out of balance, Qi is thus affected. Much like Qi disturbance, when yin or yang is out of balance, the doorway to pain and disease opens.

What causes Qi to become stagnant or yin and yang to become imbalanced?

There are many potential reasons for the above. Lack of exercise, over exertion, or trauma can lead to Qi imbalance. In addition, poor diet or lifestyle choices can lead to a disruption of the flow of Qi in the body. Excessive stress or any emotion in excess such as worry, fear, sorrow, anger, etc. can also lead to Qi stagnation. Many of us have some type of maladaptive coping skill that can adversely affect our bodies functioning. This maladaptive skill may be self taught or acquired through family socialization. In either event, once the Qi is circulating again a productive coping skill must replace the diseased coping mechanism to maintain balance.

Why use a needle?

Why use a kite to catch electricity or use wires to carry electricity from a power source to your home? Why use an antenna to catch a radio wave? The needle is used as a conduit much in the same way as the items above. Only in this instance, the needle is used to move stagnation in the body. The tiny needle triggers the body to make biochemical changes which help to resolve the issue at hand.

Will the needle hurt and what should I expect to feel during a treatment?

When we think of a needle, most of us remember an IV, immunization shot, or a visit to the dentist. The previous IS NOT the type of needle you will experience with acupuncture. Acupuncture uses hair thin needles and *many don't even notice when they go in!* Most people are amazed by how relaxed they feel *during and after* treatment. The most you might feel upon insertion is a minute prick. After insertion, you may feel tingling, warmth, coolness, distention (feeling like the insertion site is full) or you may feel something that you can only articulate as “Whoa” or “Weird.” The sensation may vary by location and intensity, but whatever the description, you will know the sensation when you feel it.

Remember:

1. Never have acupuncture performed if you have not eaten all day.
2. Eat something before a treatment, but do not eat excessively before or after a treatment.
3. Wear comfortable clothing so that points may be accessed easily.
4. If you have any type of clotting disorder, please inform your provider.
5. Make sure to inform your practitioner if any qi sensation is too intense.

What role do herbs play in the restoration of balance?

Herb selection is based on the patient's constitution and the meridians that need assistance to restore order to the body. If 6 people have a headache, they can all take acetaminophen or aspirin and the pain will go away. However, has the medication addressed the *reason* for the pain or simply supplied a pharmaceutical band-aid? Everyone knows that to kill a weed you must remove the root. Most people do not know that to prevent the seeds of a weed from growing in the first place, the soil must be balanced. An herbicide may kill the weed, but it hasn't addressed the imbalance in the soil.

As stated earlier, the use of herbs is another method used to balance Qi and open meridians. When considering acupuncture with the use of herbs, let's borrow from the headache example. Someone with a headache can come for acupuncture and, in most cases; the headache will be relieved within minutes of needle insertion as opposed to acetaminophen or aspirin, which must go through the digestive system. The added benefit of such a treatment is that you don't have to deal with any pharmaceutical related side effects or liver toxicity. After the acupuncture treatment, the patient can be placed on an herbal formula designed to begin addressing the root of their headaches so the patient can move toward balance.

What form do herbs come in?

Chinese herbalists utilize many things as herbs and some of these “herbs” are not botanicals. Chinese herbal formulary will utilize nature for healing in the form of leaves, barks, flowers, stems, roots, mineral substances, insects, animal substances, etc. These herbs are used in loose herbal forms to create decoctions, tinctures, teas, granular powders, pills, ointments, etc.

What conditions are treatable?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and National Institute of Health (NIH) the following are treatable conditions:

Addiction	Constipation	Migraines	Sciatica
Anxiety	Dental Pain	Indigestion	Shoulder Pain
Arthritis	Depression	Low Back Pain	Sinusitis
Asthma	Emotional Problems	Menopause	Sleep Disturbances
Bronchitis	Diarrhea	Menstrual Issues	Sore Throat
Carpel Tunnel	Digestive Problems	Nausea	Stress
Chronic Fatigue	Fatigue	Osteoarthritis Pain	Tennis Elbow
Colitis	Fibromyalgia	PMS	Trigeminal Neuralgia
Common Cold	Headache	Rhinitis	Wrist Pain

For a more complete listing, or to view evidence-based research on acupuncture, visit the websites listed below or go directly online to National Institute of Health (NIH) or World Health Organization (WHO).

www.nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture

www.nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/acu-osteo.htm

www.who.int/entity/mediacentre/news/releases/2004/pr44/en/

www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1142186

www.longevity-center.com/world_health_organization.html

Will acupuncture work for me?

There are a number of variables to consider when determining the treatment protocol for a particular condition, such as:

- Age
- Constitution of the individual seeking treatment
- Severity and length of time the condition has existed

Some patients feel complete or partial relief of pain or symptoms after one treatment; while others may need a series of treatments. There is no doctor that can cure 100% of patients, 100% of the time, and acupuncture should not be seen as a panacea of all disease. However, based on statistics, your chances of receiving benefit are better than not.

What are the side effects of acupuncture?

Acupuncture has low occurrence of negative side effects in contrast to many potent western medicines that have side effects worse than the illness being treated. During your treatment, only sterile, disposable, acupuncture needles are used and then disposed of after each treatment. Thus, there is little danger of infection. But one of the positive side effects is illustrated by the testimonial below.

“[After my first treatment] the change in my knee was remarkable. Sometimes you don't realize how much pain you are in until the pain is gone...” ~JS Female 27 Scottsdale, Az

If you live in Phoenix or the West Valley and you are ready to begin your PAIN FREE journey, call 602.462.1115 Today!

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