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Acupuncture

 Integrative Medicine (<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/integrative-medicine>)

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is part of the ancient practice of Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). TCM is a system of healthcare that has evolved over thousands of years to prevent, diagnose, and treat disease. TCM believes that the body's vital energy, called qi (pronounced chi), flows along specific channels or meridians. If the qi is balanced then the person has spiritual, emotional, and physical health. But when the qi isn't in balance, disease may occur. Qi can be blocked, causing unbalance between the yin and yang. This refers to two opposite but connected principles in Chinese philosophy. TCM uses many approaches to create harmony between yin and yang and restore correct flow of energy through the meridians. One of these approaches is acupuncture. Acupuncturists believe the human body has more than 2,000 acupuncture points. They are linked through the various meridians. The use of acupuncture on certain points within the meridians is believed to improve the flow of blocked or stagnant qi. Acupuncture can unblock these meridians. This restores movement of qi and improves health.

The actual practice of acupuncture includes placing thin needles into the skin on certain points of a meridian. These are then activated by the provider's hands or through electrical stimulation. Studies have shown that acupuncture works well for many conditions. These are discussed in more detail below.

Acupuncture is not for everyone. If you choose to see an acupuncturist, talk with your healthcare provider first. Find an acupuncturist who is licensed and has the right training and credentials.

What does acupuncture feel like?

Acupuncture is done using hair-thin needles. Most people report feeling little pain as the needle is put into certain points. Needles are only inserted to a point that causes a feeling of pressure or ache. Needles may be heated during the treatment. Mild electric current may also be applied to the needles. Some people say acupuncture makes them feel energized. Others say they feel relaxed.

Needles must be sterilized to prevent infection. Incorrect needle placement can cause pain during treatment. This makes it important to find an experienced, well-trained, experienced provider who understands meridians and uses sterilized needles. The FDA regulates acupuncture needles just as it does other medical devices.

Sometimes other forms of stimulation are used over the acupuncture points instead of needles. These include:

Heat (moxibustion)

Pressure (acupressure)

Friction

Suction (cupping)

Electromagnetic energy impulses

How does acupuncture affect the body?

Acupuncture points are believed to stimulate the central nervous system. This releases chemicals into the muscles, spinal cord, and brain. These biochemical changes may stimulate the body's natural healing abilities. They may promote physical and emotional well-being.

Studies have shown that acupuncture is effective alone or when used with conventional therapies to treat these conditions:

Upset stomach (nausea) caused by surgical anesthesia and cancer chemotherapy

Dental pain after surgery

Addiction

Headaches

Menstrual cramps

Tennis elbow

Fibromyalgia

Myofascial pain

Osteoarthritis

Low back pain

Carpal tunnel syndrome

Asthma

It may also help with stroke rehabilitation.

What conditions may be helped by acupuncture?

Many people in the U.S. get acupuncture treatment to ease long-term (chronic) pain. This includes arthritis and low back pain. But acupuncture has other uses around the world. Before getting acupuncture, talk with your healthcare provider. Conditions that may be helped by acupuncture include:

Digestive	Emotional
Gastritis	Anxiety
Irritable bowel syndrome	Depression
Hepatitis	Insomnia
Hemorrhoids	Nervousness
	Neurosis
Eye-Ear-Throat	Gynecological
Rhinitis	Menstrual pain
Sinusitis	Infertility
Sore throat	

Musculoskeletal

Arthritis

Back pain

Muscle cramping

Muscle pain and weakness

Neck pain

Sciatica

Neurological

Headaches

Migraines

Neurogenic bladder dysfunction

Parkinson's disease

Postoperative pain

Stroke

Respiratory

Allergic rhinitis

Sinusitis

Bronchitis

Miscellaneous

Irritable bladder

Prostatitis

Male infertility

Some forms of impotence

Addiction

Things to think about when choosing acupuncture

Scientific studies have not fully explained how acupuncture works in the framework of Western medicine. So acupuncture is still disputed. It's important to be safe when deciding about acupuncture.

Talk about acupuncture with your healthcare provider first. Acupuncture is not for everyone. Talk about all the treatments and medicines you are taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements. If you have a pacemaker, are at risk for infection, have chronic skin problems, are pregnant, or have breast or other implants, tell your provider. Acupuncture may be risky to your health if you don't talk about these things.

Don't rely on a diagnosis of disease by an acupuncture provider. If you were given a diagnosis by a healthcare provider, ask them if acupuncture might help.

Choose a licensed acupuncture provider. Talk with your healthcare provider, friends, and family members. They may be able to refer you to a licensed or certified provider. You don't have to be a medical doctor to practice acupuncture or be a certified acupuncturist. Many states have set training standards for certification in acupuncture. But not all states require acupuncturists to get a license to practice. Not all certified acupuncturists are medical doctors. But the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture can give you a list of those who do acupuncture.

Think about costs and insurance coverage. Before starting treatment, ask the acupuncturist about the number of treatments needed. Find out how much they will cost. Some insurers cover the cost. But others don't. It's important to know before you start treatment if it is covered by your insurance.

Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Clinic

Led by [Jeff Gould, LAc, DiplOM](#)

(https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/gastroenterology_hepatology/specialty_centers/acupuncture-clinic.html#expert), the Johns Hopkins Integrative Medicine and Digestive Center offers acupuncture and other Chinese medicine treatments for a variety of conditions in Lutherville, MD. Treatments are delivered in a quiet, nurturing environment while patients enjoy relaxing music.

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