

## What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of alternative medicine and is a practice of traditional Chinese medicine. Acupuncture therapy involves the stimulation of designated points on the skin by the insertion of needles, massage, the application of heat (moxibustion), or a combination of these.

## How does acupuncture work?

Acupuncture works by utilizing the network of energy that flows through the body and connects various points through pathways called “meridians.” Each meridian of the body is related to specific internal functions identified with organ structures – for example, there are meridians for the Heart, Liver, Kidney, and Lung organ systems. The meridians all form a network that circulates an energy called Qi (pronounced “chee”).

Qi moves like an electrical current. As long as the energy (Qi) has the appropriate strength and balance and the flow is not blocked, healthy functioning of the body continues. The energy can become blocked because of stress, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, or external trauma. When the energy becomes blocked, the functions of the corresponding organ system or systems are interrupted and symptoms appear.

Acupuncture treatment stimulates the body's natural healing abilities, balances Qi, and promotes physical and emotional well-being.

## What are the benefits of acupuncture?

Acupuncture has many benefits and applications, whether used alone or in combination with Chinese herbal medicine or Western medicine. It is best known for treating conditions such as:

- Neck Pain
- Back Pain
- Headaches and Migraine
- Arthritis and Joint Pain

Acupuncture can also help manage other symptoms associated with pain, including:

- Weakened immune system
- High blood pressure
- Stress hormones (which can influence blood sugar and menstrual irregularities)
- Sleep issues
- Decreased activity levels
- Mood
- Social interactions
- Flare-ups<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Changing the Conversation about Pain," OPMC Pain Education Course.  
<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HPA/dsi-pmc/Pages/module.aspx>

## **Does acupuncture hurt?**

While each person's experience with acupuncture will differ, generally there will not be discomfort or pain.

Some people may experience a sensation or brief pain as the needle passes through the skin. As the needle begins to work and the energy effect occurs, some people may also feel dull heat or a dull ache where the needle has been inserted.

After the needle has been in for a short time (usually 10 to 15 minutes), you should not be aware of any discomfort. Occasionally some mild bleeding can occur with needle removal which quickly subsides with the use of a cotton ball.

## **Is acupuncture safe?**

Yes. Acupuncture has been used for over 3,000 years in Chinese medicine. There are generally no adverse side effects from acupuncture.

Occasionally a reaction to acupuncture can occur – for example, dizziness or some nausea during treatment – but this feeling typically goes away shortly after the needles are removed.

## **What should I do before acupuncture treatment?**

- Eat a little of something
- Remain fully clothed
- Avoid smoking before acupuncture treatment
- Avoid drinking coffee before acupuncture treatment

## **What should I expect during acupuncture treatment?**

- Waiting quietly for your Acupuncturist
- No conversations
- Respectful language and quiet voices
- No phone use
- Relaxing music
- Treatments lasting around 30 minutes