

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How deep do the needles go?

That depends upon the nature of the problem, the location of the points selected, the patient's size, age, and constitution, and upon the acupuncturist's style or school. Usually, needles are inserted from 0.5 to 1 inch in depth.

Does it hurt?

Acupuncture needles are fine and flexible, just like human hair. They are different from medical hypodermic injection needles, which are stiff, hollow, and thick. If your practitioner has obtained the correct stimulus of the needle, you may feel some heaviness, distention, tingling, or electric sensation either around the needle or traveling up or down the affected meridian, or energy pathway. This sensation is minor and first-time patients are usually amazed at how comfortable they are during treatment.

Are the needles clean?

The practice among acupuncturists in America today is to use sterilized, individually packaged, disposable needles. Needles are never saved and reused for later treatments. This eliminates the possibility of transmitting a communicable disease by a contaminated needle.

How does acupuncture work?

Modern Western medicine cannot explain how acupuncture works. Traditional acupuncture is based on ancient Chinese theories of the flow of Qi (Energy) and Xue (Blood) through distinct meridians or pathways that cover the body somewhat like the nerves and blood vessels do. According to ancient theory, acupuncture allows Qi to flow to areas where it is deficient and away from where it is excessive. In this way, acupuncture regulates and restores the harmonious energetic balance of the body. In Chinese there is a saying, "There is no pain if there is free flow; if there is pain, there is no free flow."

Are there different styles of acupuncture?

Yes, there are. Acupuncture originated in China but has spread to Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Europe, the British Isles, and America. In different countries, different styles have developed based on differing opinions as to theory and technique. Patients should talk to their practitioners about their particular style and learn as much as possible about the treatment being proposed.

What criteria should one use in choosing an acupuncturist?

Patients should ask about where the practitioner trained, how long the training was, how long he or she has been in practice, and what experience the practitioner has had in treating the patient's specific ailment. Acupuncture is a licensed and regulated healthcare profession in more than half the states in the U.S., including New York.

How many treatments and how often will I need them?

That depends upon the duration, severity, and nature of your complaint. You may need only a single treatment for an acute condition. A series of five to fifteen treatments may resolve many chronic problems. Some degenerative conditions may require many treatments over time. Generally, the recommendation is two to three treatments per week for the first few weeks. Once a week treatment may be given after the condition has significantly improved.

How long do treatments take?

Depending on the patient's condition and treatment plan, usually needles remain in patient's body for 30 minutes.

What should I know about the proposed treatments?

Your practitioner will explain the nature of your problem and what treatment he or she is recommending. Your practitioner will tell you what benefits and risks there are to the proposed treatment and what other treatment options are available to you through this practitioner or by referral to another practitioner or physician. If you agree to go ahead with the treatments, your practitioner will tell you what progress to expect, what to do if you don't experience that progress, and what to do if you feel worse.

Is there anything I need to do before receiving an acupuncture treatment?

Yes, the following suggestions will help you get the maximum benefits from your treatment: 1. Maintain good personal hygiene to reduce the possibility of bacterial infection. 2. Wear loose clothing and avoid wearing tight stockings. 3. Avoid treatment when excessively fatigued, hungry, full, emotionally upset, or shortly after sex.

Is there anything I need to do while receiving acupuncture?

Yes, again: 1. Relax, There is no need to be frightened. Ask your practitioner any questions you have along the way so that you can get the most benefit possible from the treatment. 2. Do not change your position or move suddenly. If you are uncomfortable, tell your practitioner. 3. Very few people experience dizziness, nausea, cold sweat, shortness of breath, or faintness during treatment. This can occur if you are nervous. Inform your practitioner immediately so he or she can readjust or withdraw the needles. Also let your practitioner know if you feel an increasing amount of pain or burning sensation during the treatment. 4. If you find your treatment unbearable at any point, be sure to speak up so that your practitioner can make proper adjustments or stop the treatment.

What can I expect after treatment?

You may note a spot of blood at one or more of the needle sites and/or a small bruise could develop. These should not be harmful, but please talk to your practitioner if you are concerned. Patients often experience the most dramatic results after the first treatment. Some patients experience an immediate total or partial relief of their pain or other symptoms. This relief may last or some pain may return after a day or so. In a few cases, there may be no immediate relief, but patients notice the diminishment of pain over the next couple of days. Generally, you should expect to feel better, but in some small percentage of cases the treatment provokes a "healing crisis"; in such cases, the pain actually increases as a result of the treatment. This is actually a positive sign and usually indicates that relief will follow subsequent treatments

How effective is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is highly effective not only as a preventative medicine, but as a drug-free treatment of signs and symptoms. Studies indicate that acupuncture influences the central and peripheral nervous system and evidence shows it releases endorphins from the brain, which makes acupuncture particularly effective in pain control. Among a host of factors, acupuncture affects sugar, cholesterol, and triglyceride levels in the blood; the functioning of the gastrointestinal system; and the activity of the endocrine system. Acupuncture works with the body, strengthening and balancing energy. It improves circulation and allows the body to heal itself more quickly and more completely.

What if I am healthy? Can acupuncture help prevent future problems or enhance health?

Yes. Acupuncture has traditionally been used as a preventive medicine. Recent research has now verified that acupuncture stimulates immune function, which increases resistance to bacterial and viral infections. Acupuncture can dramatically increase overall vitality and energy. It treats underlying causes, resulting in a deeper kind of healing. It brings about profound changes in peoples' lives on the emotional level as well. Many people find that occasional acupuncture tune-ups are the best medicine to feel "in sync" and insure continuing health.

Is acupuncture recommended for emergency situations or acute medical problems?

It is strongly recommended that you first seek immediate medical attention at a nearby hospital for such conditions as difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath; dizziness, fainting or feeling faint; pain or pressure in the chest or upper abdomen; sudden weakness or severe pain; sudden bleeding; injuries; falls; suicide attempts; and when surgery, tests, x-rays and life support equipment may be needed. Acupuncture can be given in certain instances, depending on the circumstances involved.

Can acupuncture improve athletic performance or treat sports or work-out injuries?

Absolutely yes. Acupuncture can speed healing and eliminate the discomfort of many sports injuries.

Can I continue taking my regular medication while receiving acupuncture?

Acupuncture treatment may be used along with other medical care to great advantage. It is used for pain control after other medical or dental procedures, for improving healing, and to lessen the side effects of some Western protocols. Acupuncture is a drug-free protocol.

Can acupuncture be used with infants or children?

Yes. Needleless treatment is primarily used for young children. Studies have shown that it is useful for treating jaundice in newborns. Infants and babies can also be successfully treated for colic, earache, cerebral palsy, myopia, and bed-wetting. Many parents have found that by introducing their children to acupuncture, many childhood diseases are avoided. In the Orient, parents are encouraged to have their children treated every month as a preventive measure.

Can acupuncture help senior citizens?

Yes. Acupuncture is for people of all ages, but the elderly can often experience great benefits from enhanced circulation. It can assist with insomnia. It can increase mental clarity and regulate blood pressure. In the Orient it is recommended for stroke patients as soon as possible after their diagnosis and is helpful in eliminating or decreasing related paralysis.

Can acupuncture be effective when other treatments have failed?

Yes. Each system of medicine has its own areas in which it has its greatest effectiveness. Acupuncture's advantage is its diagnostic and treatment system with a broad and deep understanding of our energetic nature and the impact of energy in healing. It is not limited by western medicine's assumption that disease is based in biochemistry. Acupuncture is powerful medicine, which works despite belief or unknown factors.

What are other aspects of Chinese Medicine?

Acupuncture is one of three major branches of traditional Chinese medicine. The other two are Herbal Medicine and the practice of a physical and mental discipline called Qi Gong. Depending on the patient's need, treatment plans may call for any or all of the available methods.