



## Scientific Approach to Traditional Chinese Medicine

### ACUPUNCTURE

Developed in China nearly 5,000 years ago, Acupuncture has had an enduring impact on the health and well-being of a huge segment of the human population. Historically and culturally, it has proven a powerful tool for health and longevity in our species.



The ancient Chinese believed that the body incorporates a network of meridians where qi (life energy) runs in regular patterns. The meridians are like rivers flowing through the body, irrigating and nourishing the tissues. An obstruction in the movement of this energy is like a dam backing up a river.

Clinical evidence demonstrates that Acupuncture has its own values and merits that differ from technology-oriented Western medicine. It has proven itself effective for a variety of health problems—particularly pain management—a field in which Western medicine has had mixed results and often relegates to a lower priority. As a safe affordable modality, Acupuncture has no side effects and is effective by itself and in conjunction with other medical procedures. Acupuncture therapy reduces body stress and pain by stimulating the secretion of endorphins, relaxing the cardiovascular and muscular systems, and restoring the physiological and autonomic balance (homeostasis).

### MODERN PERSPECTIVE

In Acupuncture, fine needles are used to inoculate intrusive “traumas” or lesions into tissues, which stimulates many of the survival mechanisms within the body. The Acupuncture needling and its induced lesions activate self-healing mechanisms, restoring homeostasis, and facilitating repair mechanisms. These include anti-inflammatory reaction, tissue regeneration, and pain modulation. After the needles are removed, the needle-induced lesions continue to stimulate the body until the lesions heal. The healing process usually takes approximately 48 hours, although some patients feel the lesion stimulation for up to one week.

Four physiologic systems collectively comprise our body’s defense and survival mechanism. They include: the nervous system (coordinates our responses to external/internal stimuli); the cardiovascular system (provides energy, active molecules, and a comprehensive pathway for endocrine molecules and cellular cleansing); the endocrine system (secretes molecules for different conditions); and the immune system (defends the body from harmful invaders). Clinical Acupuncture stimulates all four systems.

### NATURE OF THE TREATMENT

The practitioner will take a complete health history of the patient and develop an appropriate treatment plan. The goal of such a plan will be to eliminate symptoms—while simultaneously addressing the cause of the problem. A series of Acupuncture treatments would be prescribed for the patient, possibly including some herbal prescriptions. A treatment usually comprises anywhere from 12 to 24 sessions with a frequency of two to three times per week. Again, the practitioner will devise a plan that fits the individual patient’s health care needs.

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During the treatment, the practitioner inserts tiny hair-thin needles into the specific points located along the meridians. Once the needle has punctured the tissue, the patient will feel a slight non-painful sensation (*de qi* in Chinese), which means that the *qi* (vital energy flow) has obtained or arrived. The treatment is virtually painless, the most noticeable sensation one may encounter is slight soreness or heaviness along the points.

### ACUPUNCTURE NEEDLES

The goal of the treatments is to bring the patient's body as close as possible to the state of balance. Patients often experience a sense of deep relaxation, a feeling of well-being, or a modest amount of euphoria. Treatments are cumulative and the effect of the treatment increases over time as the patient undergoes more Acupuncture procedures.

Acupuncture treatments are specific to the patient's body. The "side effects" of such an approach may correct some problems that the patient may not have noticed. For example, many patients report better sleep, elimination, control over their weight, emotional balance, energy, etc. These are all effects of the body moving back into balance.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

Since the goal of the Acupuncture treatment is to bring patient's body into the state of balance and to activate self-healing mechanisms, the patient should be aware of the following:

The strong self-healing response may be also be very "strong." When the body is fighting a problem, it often directs most of its resources toward the goal. Acupuncture therapy forces the body to return to the original problem that was overlooked for sometime and to start correcting it.

Usually, this means that the patient's symptoms gradually become less pronounced and gradually disappear. Occasionally, it may mean a temporary worsening of the symptoms, such as more pain or flu-like sensations. This is the result of the body marshalling its disease fighting resources and directing them to the source of the problem. There is no need for undue concern or to feel discouraged. This stage of the healing process is generally brief. Indeed, practitioners welcome this response. As with any healing procedure, it's beneficial to advise your practitioner if you have concerns during treatment. It may be necessary to schedule an additional session in order for the worsening stage to pass quickly and for the original problem to be overcome. This worsening of the symptoms happens infrequently—only about 10% of patients ever experience it. Most steadily improve.

### PATIENT RESPONSE VARIATION CAUSES

It's important to understand and remember that Acupuncture therapy activates the body's survival mechanisms—its self-healing potential. This inherited capability is impacted by genetic makeup, medical history, lifestyle, age, and other factors. Therefore we each have different self-healing capacities. The efficacy of Acupuncture therapy depends on the status of the self-healing potential and ability to stimulate it.

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