

Acupuncture & Allergies



According to Chinese medical theory, the symptoms and signs that indicate a Western diagnosis of allergies relate to imbalances in the meridian and Organ Systems of the body. These imbalances may stem from a variety of causes, including stress, poor diet, constitutional weakness, pollutants and environmental toxins.

Over time, if imbalances remain within the body, they will affect the functions of the Organ Systems. Some of these Organ Systems are involved in the production of Wei Qi (pronounced “way chee”). According to the theories of acupuncture and Chinese medicine, it is important to

have the correct quality and quantity of Wei Qi circulating around the body in order to stay healthy.

What is Wei Qi? The Chinese concept of Wei Qi is similar to the Western concept of the immune system. Wei Qi functions to protect and defend the body against foreign substances, that if not caught can lead to allergies. When Wei Qi is strong and abundant, we remain healthy. When the supply of Wei Qi becomes deficient, health is compromised and we become vulnerable to foreign invaders such as dust, mold, animal dander, bacteria, viruses and pollen. People who have a Wei Qi deficiency are prone to allergies and frequent colds.

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine support and strengthen the systems of the body that are involved in the production of Wei Qi. By building up the supply of Wei Qi, and facilitating the smooth and free flow of it through the body, symptoms and signs related to allergies could be greatly reduced or eliminated.

What will an acupuncturist do?

An acupuncturist will conduct a thorough exam, taking a complete health history. They will then develop a unique treatment plan that will address your specific

concerns. The goals of the treatment plan will be to eliminate visible symptoms and signs, while addressing the root causes and underlying imbalances affecting the quality and quantity of Wei Qi.



Acupuncture treatments may be combined with herbs, dietary changes, massage (tuina), or exercise. These therapies accelerate the healing process in order to balance, build, and support the body's Wei Qi.

Allergies according to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) can be due to a variety of factors.

Below are some of the more common TCM diagnoses that your acupuncturist may discover and treat.

- Wei Qi deficiency
- Spleen weakness
- Kidney deficiency
- Lung deficiency

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine are a drug-free, safe, natural and effective way to eliminate hay fever, allergies or the common cold.

Seasonal allergy tips:

- 1) Flush your nose with a Neti pot
- 2) Add spicy foods and omega-3's to your diet
- 3) Keep your windows closed during allergy season to prevent dust and pollen from entering
- 4) Put on a dust mask when you're doing yard or house work
- 5) Don't hang your clothes out to dry in the sun, as they will gather dust, mold and pollen
- 6) Come in for an acupuncture tune-up

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Acupuncture & Back Pain



Back pain is a very common problem--one that will strike four out of five Americans at some time in their lives. In fact, it's one of the top reasons people seek medical care. Unfortunately, back pain isn't always easy to diagnose or relieve. Low back pain in particular can become a chronic or ongoing problem.

Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) are very effective in treating back pain naturally. They can

also be used together with traditional Western treatments to maximize your healing and recovery.

How back pain happens There are many possible causes for back pain, including strained muscles or ligaments, often caused by improper lifting, sudden movements or traumatic injury. Other culprits can include arthritis, structural abnormalities of the spine, or the disks between the vertebrae bulging or rupturing and pressing on a nerve. Depending on the specific diagnosis, back pain is generally treated with medications, physical therapy, chiropractic care, and in some cases, surgery.

A more natural approach Practitioners of acupuncture and TCM view back pain another way. An acupuncturist will not only work to relieve your symptoms, but will also work to find and treat the underlying cause of your pain. In a study conducted at a Swedish hospital, doctors concluded that acupuncture provided long-term relief along with improvements in physical activity levels, quality of sleep and the diminished use of pain medication.

Acupuncture and TCM are based on the concept that Qi (pronounced "chee"), or vital energy, flows through the body in channels called meridians. If Qi becomes stagnant, unbalanced or deficient, symptoms such as back pain, ache and inflammation can result. This can happen for any number of reasons, from injury and illness to stress or external invaders such as wind or dampness. Back pain can arise from disharmonies such as:

- Stagnation—type pain that is often linked to sudden, stabbing, severe pain and related to sprains, strains or trauma. It can be accompanied by stiffness and tightness and becomes worse with rest. If it occurs often in the same area(s) it may reflect an underlying deficiency.
- Cold, damp obstruction—type pain that is generally worse in the morning and exacerbated by cold or damp weather. This type of pain condition may be associated with numbness, swelling and a sense of "heaviness." Heat improves this condition.

“Acupuncture represents a highly promising and effective treatment option for chronic back pain. Patients experienced not only reduced pain intensity, but also reported improvements in the disability that often results from back pain, and therefore in their quality of life.”

– H. Endres, MD

- Deficiency-type pain that is usually a chronic condition that presents with a “dull” pain and improves with rest.

Restoring balance Once your practitioner has determined the cause(s) of your back pain, he or she will create a specific treatment plan designed to address your concerns and boost your overall health and vitality. During acupuncture treatments, your practitioner will insert fine, sterile needles into specific acupuncture points along the meridian pathways in order to restore the balance and flow of Qi. He or she may also perform acupressure or

other types of therapy, based on your unique issues and symptoms.

Your practitioner may also suggest lifestyle changes and self-care techniques, especially if you struggle with chronic pain. These may include:

- **Improving your posture.** Examine your posture in a mirror. Try to stand with your head up, shoulders back and pelvis in a neutral position. When sitting, try to sit upright with your feet flat on the floor and your knees and hips level. Try to balance your weight evenly when walking and standing.
- **Exercising.** Keep your back and abdominal muscles strong with regular exercise. Yoga and Qi Gong are both gentle and effective. Consider adding aerobic exercise as well to improve your overall health and reduce stress.
- **Managing stress.** Stress can take a real toll on your health and contribute to muscle pain. Meditation or deep-breathing techniques can help you stay calm and relaxed. Massage is another great way to help relieve stress and loosen tense muscles.

More and more people are finding relief for both acute and chronic back pain through acupuncture and TCM. If you or someone you love is struggling with back pain, call today to find out how acupuncture can help.

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Acupuncture & Stress



Stress is a natural nonspecific response of the body to the various demands we place upon it. However, stress is not necessarily negative. There is a distinction between healthy and unhealthy stress. Healthy

stress includes appropriate physical exercise, good eating habits, positive thinking, adequate rest, and a natural response to emergency situations. These stressors keep us alert and motivated, and support our body's strength and vitality. Unhealthy stress, such as negative emotions and thinking, overexertion, poor eating habits, lack of sleep, and chemical and environmental pollutants and toxins, challenge our health and can trigger physical and mental problems, particularly if they are experienced over a prolonged period of time.

In ancient times, our stress response, also known as our fight or flight response, provided us with energy to preserve life during difficult situations, such as an attack or threat by a wild animal. Today, we don't have to look much further than our windows, or computer screens, to view various forms of stressors—everything from prime-time news and road rage, to the 40-hour work week, terrorism talk, and cell phones. All of these combine to send even the most serene people into a stressful frenzy.

Unfortunately, modern day stress is considerably higher, more frequent and more consistent than what our predecessors experienced. Over time this excess stress can actually be detrimental to our health. Our body's natural response to stressful situations is to activate all available

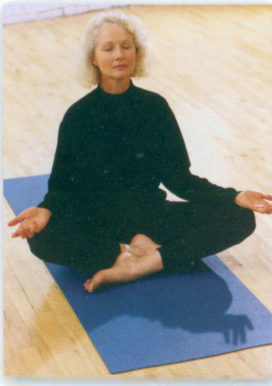
Signs and symptoms of an overactive response to stress:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Asthma
- Depression
- Depressed immune system
- Digestive disorders
- Headaches
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Joint pain
- Weight problems

resources for survival, and to get us out of a scary situation fast. However, with the increase in physical, emotional and mental stressors, our stress response gets "locked in", resulting in the depletion of the body's resources.

Even if the stressors are no longer present, the body continues to keep the stress response active. This results in the depletion of our nervous system, lymphatic organs (spleen, thymus, and lymph nodes), kidneys and adrenal

glands, and can pave the way for a wide variety of symptoms and signs. Medical studies have shown that with increased and consistent stress, our white blood cells, which defend our body against viruses, decrease. This decrease results in lower immune resistance, ultimately leading to



There is Hope Practitioners of acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) have been helping people cope with stress for thousands of years. The ancient theories of TCM on how stress affects the organs are similar to those of Western medicine; however, TCM theory and treatment go far beyond treating symptoms and signs.

Along with treating physical and emotional symptoms and signs associated with stress, this ancient medicine

addresses the root cause(s) of the problem. One way that stress affects the body is by causing a depletion or blockage of Qi, especially that of the Kidneys and adrenals.

Qi (pronounced "chee") is the vital energy or power that animates and supports the functions of the body. It flows through specific pathways, called meridians, and provides nourishment for the entire body. When Qi becomes "blocked" or the supply is inadequate, the body and organ systems become "stressed out" and our health is then compromised.

Things you can do to help combat stress:

- 1) Practice yoga - When you practice yoga, you create an awareness of your body and mind connection, freeing your mind of stressful thoughts.
- 2) Start a hobby - Hobbies require a mindful presence and can break a hectic, stressful pace.
- 3) Do one thing at a time - Many of us believe that multitasking allows us to get more done, faster. If you focus on one task at a time, you can get more done with fewer mistakes.
- 4) Meditate - Meditation teaches us to stay focused on our breath and posture. When you are in a meditative state, you are present and in touch with your innate wisdom.

With acupuncture and TCM, the practitioner's job is to support and restore the integrity of the various organs affected and depleted by the stress response, along with evaluating the quality and quantity of Qi.

Your acupuncturist may also suggest adjunct therapies to enhance treatment, and speed healing. Proper eating habits, as well as the use of exercise, stretching, movement and meditation practices, support and promote a balanced and healthy body, mind and spirit.

Acupuncture and TCM can provide a safe, effective and drug-free alternative for the treatment of stress.

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Acupuncture & Hypertension



Hypertension, or high blood pressure, affects more than one in three Americans, but most people may not even know they have it. Since hypertension can lead to heart attacks and other life-

threatening health problems, it's very important to learn all you can and take action to lower your risk.

Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) offer a safe, natural, and pain-free way to keep your blood pressure in check.

What is hypertension? Blood pressure is the actual force of blood flowing against your artery walls. Getting your blood pressure tested is a quick, simple process. It's measured in two numbers: systolic pressure and diastolic pressure. Blood pressure is considered high if your systolic pressure is at or above 140 mm Hg, and/or your diastolic pressure is at or above 90 mm Hg.

Often called "the silent killer," hypertension doesn't usually cause symptoms until it gets severe enough to lead to major health problems such as heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, and metabolic disorders. It has also been linked to dementia and cognitive impairment.

What causes hypertension? More than 90% of cases of high blood pressure are known as "essential hypertension" and have no identifiable cause. "Secondary hypertension," on the other hand, is caused by underlying conditions such as kidney disease or certain medications.

The risk factors for essential hypertension include age (the risk is higher after age 35), race (African Americans are at higher risk), and a family history of the condition. While you can't control those factors, there are many you can control, including:

- Being overweight
- Drinking heavily
- Being stressed
- Not exercising
- Consuming too much salt
- Using tobacco

How can acupuncture and TCM help? Fortunately, there are many ways to lower your blood pressure. Typical Western treatments includes controlling your risk factors and taking medication if needed. By incorporating acupuncture and TCM into your treatment plan, you can treat your hypertension and

Western medicine has a different approach for the treatment of hypertension, and relates it to a disease of the cardiovascular system. Acupuncture and TCM practitioners take a holistic, or “whole body,” approach for the treatment of hypertension, and take into account inharmonious conditions of the whole system than can involve the function of the liver, kidneys, digestive system and heart.

Treatment is based upon the idea of Qi (pronounced “chee”), the vital energy that flows through pathways called meridians, providing nourishment for all of the body’s organs and protecting it from illness. When the flow of Qi becomes diminished or blocked, disease and illness result.

Self-care for lowering blood pressure. Consider these self-care techniques:

- Get daily aerobic exercise.
- Add Tai-Chi and Qi-Gong to your workout.
- Meditate or spend time alone to reduce stress.
- Practice slow, deep breathing.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Reduce the amount of fat and salt in your diet and increase your intake of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid smoking, alcohol, coffee, and spicy foods.

The goal of treatment is to find and address the underlying imbalance(s) affecting the flow of Qi, leading to the elevated blood pressure and various symptoms. By addressing the root cause of your high blood pressure, TCM can help your body regain its natural balance. In doing so, you’ll also be strengthening your health and reducing the risk of future health conditions.

Acupuncture and TCM have proven effective against a wide variety of health concerns. Studies have found that a special form of acupuncture called electro-acupuncture, which uses electrical stimulation, may be particularly helpful in lowering blood pressure. By working together with your practitioner, you’ll be on your way to successfully treating your hypertension and improving your health, for today and the days ahead. Similar to healthy eating and regular exercise, consistent acupuncture treatments should be considered for the greatest long-term results.

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Acupuncture & Colds & Flu



Each year, more than 100,000 people are hospitalized due to complications from the flu virus. Unfortunately, most of us get the “flu,” or “influenza,” virus at least once in our lifetime. The associated symptoms and signs are all-too-common: fever, sore throat, congestion, fatigue, muscle and body aches, runny nose, dry cough, sneezing and watery eyes.

Colds are much less severe than the flu, but like the flu, viruses and germs cause colds. Colds cause less severe symptoms such as nasal congestion, sneezing, coughing, sore throat, and light headaches. Though it may make you feel lousy, getting a cold is not always a bad thing. Instead, it’s a sign that the body’s resources are strong and vital, working to return you to a state of good health. However, if your immune system is already compromised, a cold could further weaken your body, leaving you open to a more serious illness.

The flu, you, and Chinese medicine Clinical studies have suggested that using acupuncture as a preventative approach to colds and flu can reduce the incidence of upper respiratory tract infection and shorten the length of the illness. Acupuncture and Chinese medicine work by rebalancing the body’s systems, regulating the body’s healing energies and enhancing the immune system.

Even though germs, bacteria, and viruses are everywhere—in the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the water we drink—according to Chinese medical theory, they do not cause disease. Illness occurs when certain organ systems are weak and out of balance. When our bodies are in a weakened and unbalanced state, a hospitable environment is created for germs, bacteria and viruses to thrive, leading to a cold or the flu.

One of the main theories supporting acupuncture and its treatment of colds and the flu is the concept of Wei Qi.

What in the world is Wei Qi? The concept of Wei Qi is similar to the Western concept of the immune system. Wei Qi functions as a barrier protecting and defending the body against foreign substances, which can cause illness and disease. When Wei Qi is strong and abundant, we remain healthy. When the supply of Wei Qi becomes inadequate, health is compromised and we become vulnerable to outside invaders.

Throughout our lives, a variety of factors affect our health and well-being. Although most of the time we recover quickly and regain our health, when these factors are numerous, our internal

mechanisms become compromised and weakened, our Wei Qi becomes depleted, and we get sick. By the time illness occurs, the body's self-regulating, self-balancing and healing systems have already been affected.

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine support and strengthen the systems of the body that are involved in the production of Wei Qi, and can help rebalance and support the immune system and stimulate Wei Qi energy. By building up the supply of Wei Qi, and facilitating the smooth and free flow of it throughout the body, the body's organs and meridian systems become strong, enhancing their ability to effectively fight off illness and disease.

Acupuncture and Chinese medicine are drug free, safe, natural and effective ways to support the body's self-regulating, self-balancing and healing systems. If illness does occur, acupuncture can help you get back on your feet again, helping to stave off prolonged illness without the use of medication and over-the-counter drugs.

Tips for Staying Healthy:

- Consume 8-10 glasses of filtered water daily
- Exercise regularly to support the immune system
- Eat a healthy, organic diet, including foods with beta carotene (carrots, broccoli, sweet potatoes, garlic and tomatoes)
- Limit sugar intake. Sugar taxes the immune system, especially when feeling under the weather
- Take Vitamin C and herbs to support the immune system, especially in the "cold and flu" season
- Get plenty of rest
- Enjoy fun and relaxing activities
- Stimulate specific acupuncture points that support Wei Qi
- Schedule regular acupuncture treatments to support the body's self-regulating, self-balancing and healing systems

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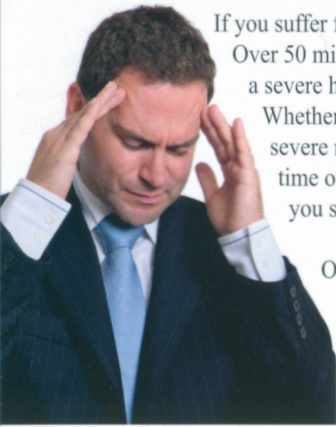
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Acupuncture & Headaches



If you suffer from headaches, you're not alone. Over 50 million of us experience some form of a severe headache at some point in our lives. Whether you experience minor head pain or severe migraines, headaches can take valuable time out of your day and your life, and leave you searching for relief.

One way to seek relief is by reaching for drugs and other medications. This is fine for the short run, and can help you get out of pain fast. Unfortunately, common headache medications don't address the "root"

cause(s), and when used over long periods of time, can cause unwanted side effects.

Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) offer a safe and effective approach to relieving headache pain, without causing harmful side effects, and incorporate a comprehensive diagnostic protocol that can help your acupuncturist understand and address the "root" cause(s) of your headaches.

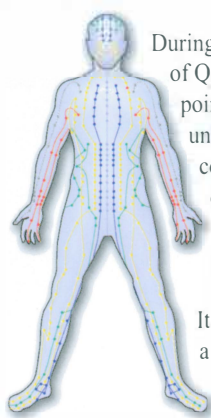
Understanding headache types There are many factors in TCM theory that may play a key role in the root cause(s) of a headache. These include body constitution, emotional health, excessive work, social and exercise activities, improper diet, physical trauma and pregnancy. Headaches can also be diagnosed according to specific symptoms, times of occurrence, location on the body, type of pain, triggers and remedies which provide relief.

What do you mean my Qi is out of balance?

An important part of Acupuncture and TCM is the concept of Qi. Qi (pronounced "chee") is the vital energy that animates the body and protects it from illness. It flows through pathways called meridians, and provides nourishment to all of the body's organs. When there is an imbalance or blockage in the flow of Qi, physical symptoms may result. Qi stagnation may be the cause of your headaches.

A natural path to relief

Acupuncture and TCM take a holistic, or whole-body approach to health. Your practitioner will take a detailed health history, and perform a physical exam to determine how and why your body's vital energy, or Qi, is out of balance, and what root causes are contributing to the overall problem. This will allow him or her to identify the type of headaches you are experiencing, and by identifying and treating the underlying causes, not just the symptoms, apply the most effective care.



During treatment, in order to restore the balance and flow of Qi, fine sterile needles will be inserted at specific points along the meridian pathways. Based on your unique symptoms, your acupuncturist will choose to concentrate on acupuncture points related to specific organs. Afterwards, a variety of self-care techniques may be prescribed to further expedite your healing process.

It is important to remember that acupuncture is not a “quick fix.” Changes may occur quickly or over a longer period of time, depending upon your overall constitution and health. It is

Meridian Pathways also important to closely follow care recommendations suggested by your acupuncturist. Whether it’s one visit to address an acute problem, or several visits to address a chronic problem, your acupuncturist will create a treatment protocol that will maximize your healing potential.

Below are a few ways that you can participate in your own healing, by making simple lifestyle changes that may help soothe—or even prevent—head pain.

Track those triggers: Try to keep track of when your headaches start. Migraine sufferers may find it especially helpful to keep a diary of symptoms and possible causes. Triggers might include anything from eating chocolate, to anxiety or inhaling specific smells. Pinpointing these triggers—and avoiding them when possible—could help.

Stress relief: Stress puts a lot of strain on the body, and can contribute to many types of health concerns, including headaches. Talk to your practitioner about healthy ways to handle stress, such as meditation or breathing techniques.

Exercise: Physical activity is an important part of any healthy lifestyle, and is a great antidote to stress. Your acupuncturist can recommend types of exercises that may work best for you.

Healthy habits: Making minor changes can make a big difference in your overall health and vitality. Do your best to eat healthy, organic foods, and make sure to get enough sleep every day.

Naturally, acupuncture care is extremely effective in reducing the frequency and severity of many types of painful conditions, including headache pain. By working with your acupuncturist and adopting some simple lifestyle changes, you’ll be on your way toward a healthier, happier, pain-free life

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Modern Research & Acupuncture

Acupuncture & IVF - A systematic review and meta-analysis suggested that women undergoing IVF were 65 percent more likely to become pregnant when they integrated acupuncture into their normal IVF treatments. *BMJ*, 2008 February

Acupuncture & Insomnia - In the treatment of insomnia, acupuncture yields significant results with a total effective rate of 90.44%. It also improves the quality of sleep and overcomes complications induced by sleep medication. Sok, SR, et. al., The effects of acupuncture therapy on insomnia. *J. Adv Nurs.*, 2003 Nov;44(4):375-84. *J Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2002 Dec.;22 (4):276-77.

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Acupuncture & Shoulder Pain - Acupuncture is effective in the treatment of shoulder periarthritis. Of the 210 subjects studied, 158 were cured, 40 improved and 12 showed no significant improvement. *J. Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2003 Sept.;23(3):201-02.

Acupuncture & Fibromyalgia - A study conducted showed that acupuncture, when added to traditional fibromyalgia treatments, reduces pain and improves the quality of life for up to three months following treatment. *J. Rehab. Med.*, 2008 Jul.;40(7):582-88.

Acupuncture & Blood Pressure - A German study concluded that acupuncture can create a significant reduction in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. At the end of six weeks, subjects who received acupuncture achieved a reduction in both systolic and diastolic readings from their base-line. Researchers noted no noticeable change in subjects who received sham acupuncture. *J. Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2003 Mar.;23(1):49-0.

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Acupuncture & Depression - All subjects receiving acupuncture for major depression significantly improved by a greater margin than those not receiving treatment. Another study suggests that electro-acupuncture can produce the same therapeutic results as tetracyclic drugs, but with fewer side effects and better symptomatic improvement. Acupuncture Treatment for Major Depression, the *Tenth Annual Symposium of the Society for Acupuncture Research*, 2003. *J. Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 2004 Sep.;24(3):172-6.

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Acupressure & Morning Sickness - A study was set up to determine the efficacy of acupressure in the treatment of pregnant women suffering from nausea, with or without vomiting. The study concluded that acupressure was extremely effective in controlling symptoms of nausea and vomiting, without adverse side effects, when compared to the placebo group. *Comp. Therapy Clin. Practice*, 2008 Feb;14(1):46-52.

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Acupuncture & Osteoarthritis (OA) - A randomized, controlled study showed that acupuncture can provide improvement in function and pain relief as an adjunctive therapy for OA when compared to sham acupuncture. Berman, BM., et al., *Effectiveness of Acupuncture as Adjunctive Therapy in Osteoarthritis of the Knee: a randomized, controlled trial. Annals of Internal Medicine*, Dec.21,2004;141(12):901-910.

Acupuncture Cupping (AC) & Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) - A study was conducted using AC in subjects suffering from CFS. After six weeks of receiving AC,

Acupuncture is recognized by the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to be effective in the treatment of:

- Addiction - alcohol, drug, smoking
- Anxiety
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Chronic fatigue
- Colitis
- Common cold
- Constipation
- Dental pain
- Depression
- Diarrhea
- Digestive trouble
- Dizziness
- Dysentery
- Emotional problems
- Eye problems
- Facial palsy/tics
- Fatigue
- Fertility
- Fibromyalgia
- Gingivitis
- Headache
- Hiccough
- Incontinence
- Indigestion
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Low back pain
- Menopause
- Menstrual irregularities
- Migraine
- Morning sickness
- Nausea
- Osteoarthritis
- Pain
- PMS
- Pneumonia
- Reproductive problems
- Rhinitis
- Sciatica
- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)
- Shoulder pain
- Sinusitis
- Sleep disturbances
- Smoking cessation
- Sore throat
- Stress
- Tennis elbow
- Tonsillitis
- Tooth pain
- Trigeminal neuralgia
- Urinary tract Infections
- Vomiting
- Wrist pain

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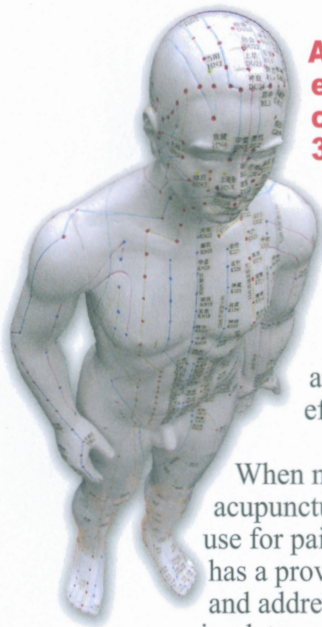
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Modern Research & Acupuncture

"There is sufficient evidence of acupuncture's value to expand its use into conventional medicine."

- National Institute of Health, 1997 Consensus on Acupuncture





Acupuncture has been employed as a health care modality for over 3,000 years. Practitioners of this ancient medical practice have experienced clinical success with a variety of health issues. Today, acupuncture is receiving wide acceptance as a respected, valid and effective form of health care.

When most people think about acupuncture, they are familiar with its use for pain control. But acupuncture has a proven track record of treating and addressing a variety of endocrine, circulatory and systemic conditions.

Acupuncture and modern medicine, when used together, have the potential to support, strengthen and nurture the body towards health and well-being.

What is known about the physiological effects of acupuncture. Over the last few decades, research has been conducted seeking to explain how acupuncture works and what it can and cannot treat.

The 1997 National Institute of Health (NIH) Consensus on Acupuncture reports that “studies have demonstrated that acupuncture can cause multiple biological responses, mediated mainly by sensory neurons, to many structures within the central nervous system. This can lead to activation of pathways, affecting various physiological systems in the brain, as well as in the periphery.”¹¹

The NIH Consensus also suggests that acupuncture “may activate the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland, resulting in a broad spectrum of systemic effects. Alteration in the secretion of neurotransmitters and neurohormones, and changes in the regulation of blood flow, both centrally and peripherally, have been documented. There is also evidence of alterations in immune functions produced by acupuncture.”¹²

Below are current theories on the mechanism of acupuncture:

- 1. Neurotransmitter Theory:** Acupuncture affects higher brain areas, stimulating the secretion of beta-endorphins and enkephalins in the brain and spinal cord. The release of neurotransmitters influences the immune system and the antinociceptive system.^{3,4,5}
- 2. Autonomic Nervous System Theory:** Acupuncture stimulates the release of norepinephrine, acetylcholine and several types of opioids, affecting changes in their turnover rate, normalizing the autonomic nervous system, and reducing pain.^{6,7}
- 3. Gate Control Theory:** Acupuncture activates non-nociceptive receptors that inhibit the transmission of nociceptive signals in the dorsal horn, “gating out” painful stimuli.⁸
- 4. Vascular-interstitial Theory:** Acupuncture effects the electrical system of the body by creating or enhancing closed-circuit transport in tissues. This facilitates healing by allowing the transfer of material and electrical energy between normal and injured tissues.⁹
- 5. Blood Chemistry Theory:** Acupuncture affects the blood concentrations of triglycerides, cholesterol, and phospholipids, suggesting that acupuncture can both raise and diminish peripheral blood components, thereby regulating the body toward homeostasis.¹⁰

According to a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 51% of medical doctors understand the efficacy and value of acupuncture, and medical doctors refer patients to acupuncturists more than any other alternative care provider.¹¹

The NIH Consensus on Acupuncture further states that clinical experience, supported by research data, suggests “acupuncture may be a reasonable option for a number of clinical conditions.”¹²

Evidence also points to positive clinical trials that “include addiction, stroke rehabilitation, carpal tunnel syndrome, osteoarthritis, and headaches.” The Consensus also mentions that acupuncture treatment may be helpful for other conditions such as asthma, postoperative pain, myofascial pain and low back pain.¹³

This ancient health care system is proving itself as an effective modality for a wide variety of problems. So much so that the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) awarded 8 grants that directly relate to acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine and traditional Chinese medical research, totaling more than \$9.5 million dollars.

“One of the advantages of acupuncture is that the incidence of adverse effects is substantially lower than that of many drugs or other accepted medical procedures used for the same conditions. As an example, musculoskeletal conditions, such as fibromyalgia, myofascial pain, and tennis elbow, or epicondylitis, are conditions for which acupuncture may be beneficial. These painful conditions are often treated with, among other things, anti-inflammatory medications (aspirin, ibuprofen, etc.) or with steroid injections. Both medical interventions have a potential for deleterious side effects, but are still widely used and are considered acceptable treatments. The evidence supporting these therapies is no better than that for acupuncture.”¹⁴

Acupuncture works as an effective alternative and adjunct treatment modality. It is a safe, effective and natural approach to help regain and maintain health and well being.

