

Acupuncture



Acupuncture is a technique of inserting hair-like, fine needles into known "acupuncture points" along "meridians". The intentions behind such treatments are those of balancing and tonifying the flow of Qi or vital energy throughout the physical, emotional and spiritual bodies.



Generally, there is minimal sensation. This is due to the extreme fineness of the needle, the sharpness of its point, and the dexterity of the practitioner in inserting it swiftly through the skin. Once the needle is in place, a sensation of a dull ache, a light electric current circulation along the treated limb, to a nice heat may be felt.



The sensation varies according to the body's constitution and the nature of the ailment or the pain. Some people don't feel anything. This sensation is always within bearable limits and is considered a sign that the acupuncture vessels are opening up to the flow of Qi and that healing is imminent.

The practice of acupuncture is at least four to five thousand years old, perhaps much older. The first systematic compendium on the subject was the Huang Ti Nei Ching Su Wen, or The Yellow

Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine, written about 400 B.C.E.

Today's practitioners of Chinese medicine still look to the Nei Ching, as it is called, for guidance and instruction.

The practice of acupuncture is based on the meridian theory in which qi (pronounced chee) or vital energy, is believed to travel through precise pathways or meridians. There are twelve major meridians, each connected to a particular organ, plus eight special or "extra" meridians. There are also innumerable smaller meridians throughout the body.

The meridians connect the organs to each other and connect the interior of the body to the exterior. They actually form a sort of grid or road map of the entire bodily system. Acupuncture is the practice of placing extremely thin needles at special junctures or "points" along these meridians, in order to affect the energy and balance of the body. Needling is said to "reduce what is excessive, increase what is deficient, warm what is cold, cool what is hot, circulate what is stagnant, move what is congealed, stabilize what is reckless, raise what is falling and lower what is rising."

There are about 365 points on the body (not including the "special" or "extra" points or those which are part of the modern auricular or ear systems), although most practitioners only use about 150. The acupuncturist must be extremely sensitive and observant in determining exactly which of these points to use, and how. It is a very demanding, yet very delicate art, one which can bring about sublime and, at times, dramatic changes in one's energy level, healing capacity and even one's outlook on life.

One of the most dramatic roles of acupuncture, and probably the most familiar to Westerners, is its use as anesthesia or analgesia. All sorts of major surgical procedures are done today in China with little or no anesthesia other than acupuncture. During a highly publicized trip to China in the early 1970s, one member of President Nixon's party was stricken with appendicitis. His appendectomy was performed using acupuncture instead of traditional Western anesthesia, and he was soon telling everyone back home about his amazing experience. This accidental publicity helped to open many doors for the now commonly accepted use of acupuncture in the United States.

There are different theories which attempt to explain how acupuncture works as anesthesia. One idea is that the needles block the pain impulse as it moves through the central nervous system and prevent it from reaching the brain. Another is that the needles stimulate the release of endorphins, our bodies' own natural pain killers.

Another use of acupuncture in the Western world is in treatment of addictions. Here, primarily ear points are used to reduce the cravings for alcohol, drugs and cigarettes. Many people also report far fewer withdrawal symptoms when they use acupuncture in their efforts to free themselves of chemical dependency, partly because the detoxifying treatment strengthens the organ system in order to support the addict's ability to cope with stress.

It is clear that acupuncture has many uses in today's world. It is a simple form of treatment which neither has side effects nor risk of addiction. And it works as well in veterinary use as it does on humans.

Modern science explains the functions of Acupuncture in 2 ways



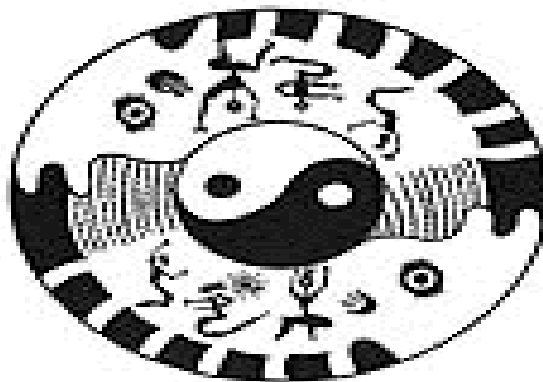
1. Needling the acupuncture points stimulates the nervous system to release chemicals in the muscles, spinal cord, and brain. These chemicals will either change the experience of pain, or they will trigger the release of other chemicals and hormones which influence the body's own internal regulating system.

2. In traditional Chinese medicine YIN represents "-" (negative) and YANG represents "+" (positive). The main principle of Chinese medicine is to keep the YIN and YANG balance or bring YIN and YANG back to balance. YIN YANG balance is the healthy state of the body. Modern science reveals that the very basic unit of the body is cell. Cells' movement follow the movement of electrons. The electrons inside cells act according to its own regular patterns. We call all these electrons in living body bio-electrons.

Energy flow in the meridians is the direct or indirect transportation of bioelectrons. Meridians are the pathways where bioelectrons move more frequently than other parts of the body. When positive and negative charges in the bioelectronic movements are not balanced, the cells would act abnormally -- this is YIN and YANG imbalance. In Chinese medicine it is defined as "disease". It is a beginning stage of the physiological cells electrons movement. Only radical change of the cells electrons movement is admitted by Western medicine. as "disease".

All the external factors, such as mechanical, physical, chemical, biological and internal factors such as mental, hereditary, constitutional can cause and force the body's bioelectrical movement turn to imbalance would lead to disease.

Acupuncture can force the bioelectrons resume to their normal and regular movement patterns and YIN YANG balance. The more acupuncture treatment the patient have the longer the normal movement pattern of the bioelectrons can remain, until finally the electrons inside cells would not follow the abnormal movement pattern any more. Only at this point the problem can be deemed as solved and treated completely.



The Chinese character for Acupuncture is made up of characters for Gold and Needle. On the left, you see the top of the mountain, under which is hidden, between strata of earth, two small nuggets of gold. On the right is a needle with thread passing through it. FAQ, What a treatment is like, Statistical Results, List of Conditions

NEWS ARTICLES

[Acupuncture Helps Chronic Headache Sufferers](#)

Reuters - March 15, 2004

Acupuncture is a useful, cost-effective treatment for patients who suffer from chronic headaches or migraine, American researchers said on Monday.

In one of the largest randomized studies to assess the effectiveness of the ancient Chinese treatment, scientists found it worked better than just conventional treatments alone.

"People using acupuncture had fewer headaches, less severe headaches and they used less health resources over the course of the following year," Dr Andrew Vickers, of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, said in an interview.

The scientists compared acupuncture plus standard treatment to normal therapy alone in 401 patients in England and Wales who suffered from headaches several days each week. Their research is published online by the British Medical Journal.

Patients who had been assigned acupuncture plus standard treatment received up to 12 treatments over three months.

Initially there was not much difference between the two groups but at the end of the year-long trial the scientist noticed a big change.

Patients receiving acupuncture had 22 fewer days of headaches per year, used 15 percent less medication, made 25 percent fewer visits to their family doctors and took fewer days off sick than the other group.

There were not many side effects and Vickers and his colleagues also found that the treatment was cost effective.

Acupuncture was first used in China about 2,000 years ago, according to Vickers. It involves inserting very fine needles into the skin at specific points in the body. It is one of the most popular forms of complementary medicine and has been shown to relieve nausea and pain.

German researchers have also said it could help women undergoing fertility treatment to conceive.

[Acupuncture's secret: Blood flow to brain](#) USA Today - March 2004

Acupuncture on pain-relief points cuts blood flow to key areas of the brain within seconds, providing the clearest explanation to date for how the ancient technique might relieve pain and treat addictions, a Harvard scientist reports today.

Although researchers still don't fully understand how acupuncture works, "our findings may connect the dots, showing how a common pathway in the brain could make acupuncture helpful for a variety of conditions," says radiologist Bruce Rosen of Harvard Medical School. He'll release the findings at the American Psychosomatic Society meeting in Orlando.

Rosen's team used functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, or MRIs, on about 20 healthy volunteers before, during and after acupuncture. This type of brain scan shows changes in blood flow and the amount of oxygen in blood.

Researchers applied acupuncture needles to points on the hand linked to pain relief in traditional Chinese medicine. Blood flow decreased in certain areas of the brain within seconds of volunteers reporting a heaviness in their hands, a sign the acupuncture is working correctly, Rosen says. The needle technique is not supposed to hurt if done correctly. When a few subjects reported pain, their scans showed an increase of blood to the same brain areas.

"When there's less blood, the brain isn't working as hard," Rosen says. "In effect, acupuncture is quieting down key regions of the brain."

The specific brain areas affected are involved in mood, pain and cravings, Rosen says. This could help explain why some studies have found acupuncture helpful in treating depression, eating problems, addictions and pain.

The brain regions involved also are loaded with dopamine, a "reward" chemical that surges in reaction to everything from cocaine to food, beautiful faces and money. The reduced blood flow could lead to dopamine changes that trigger a "cascade" effect, releasing endorphins, the brain's natural pain-relieving and comforting chemicals, Rosen says.

Rosen's study "is a very exciting first step," says neurobiologist Richard Hammerschlag of the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine in Portland, but controlled research on pain and addiction patients will be needed to prove the point. Brain scans should be done on patients getting acupuncture at real and bogus points, he says, and patients shouldn't know which group they're in.

The placebo effect is so powerful it could affect blood flow, says UCLA neurobiologist Christopher Evans, a pain expert. There's even some evidence that placebos can increase brain chemicals, such as endorphins, Hammerschlag says.

[Kids' acupuncture gaining interest](#) November 2002 - MSNBC

[Animal Acupuncture](#) November 2002 - National Geographic



Acupuncture helps heart patients

November 18, 2001 - BBC

Acupuncture can improve the prospects of people with severe heart failure, research has shown.

Researchers found the ancient Chinese practice has the potential to dramatically reduce the pressure on the heart.

This is because it can reduce activity in the sympathetic nervous system, which regulates involuntary movements such as heartbeat and blood pressure.

Acupuncture has been used successfully and with long-range results in improving hypertension, and it may also be beneficial in lowering sympathetic nerve activity.

It also makes it more likely that the heart will develop potentially lethal rhythm patterns.

The lead researcher is Dr Holly Middlekauff, of the University of California Los Angeles School of Medicine.

Increasing interest

She said: "There is an ever-increasing interest in alternative medicine. But until now, no one had looked at acupuncture's effect on the very sickest heart failure patients.

"Our research represents a promising first step, but more study is definitely needed."

Dr Middlekauff said advanced heart failure patients often had two or three times more sympathetic nerve activity than normal.

It has been shown that the greater this activity is, the worse the outlook for the patient.

The researchers divided 14 critically ill chronic heart failure patients referred for heart

transplantation evaluation into three groups.

One group received acupuncture at traditional acupuncture sites.

The second received "non-acupoint" acupuncture in which needles were placed at sites not traditionally believed to be useful in acupuncture.

Finally, the third group had a "no-needle" simulation of the treatment, in which a needle holder is tapped to the back of their neck, but no needle was inserted.

Activation

Blood pressure, heart rate and sympathetic nerve activity were measured in all the patients following a four-minute mental stress test.

This involved, among other things, participants performing math problems in their heads and answering aloud.

Sympathetic nerve activation was significantly reduced in the acupuncture group.

Dr Middlekauff said further study is needed before acupuncture could be recommended as a routine treatment for patients with severe heart failure.

Scientists pinpoint what makes acupuncture work

June 2000

Scientists in China and California reported Thursday that they've discovered how acupuncture acts on the body's pain and anxiety nerve systems to lower blood pressure and reduce the heart's workload.

In studies on cats, Dr. John Longhurst of the University of California-Irvine and Li Peng of Shanghai Medical University found that acupuncture reduced blood pressure that had been artificially inflated, but didn't work when they injected a drug known to inhibit the brain's endorphin system. The results are reported in the June issue of the *American Journal of Physiology*.

Endorphins are considered the body's natural opiate system, because morphine, heroin and other opiate drugs affect the same nerve cells. The chemicals in the system regulate nerve cells that relax muscles, dull pain, and reduce panic and anxiety. It also has been shown to lower blood pressure and reduce the workload on the heart.

"Endorphins have been known to help the body prevent heart disease, but we've never seen how they can be affected by acupuncture," Longhurst said, even though the technique has been used by Chinese practitioners for thousands of years. "These findings help us merge what Western medicine has taught us with the tradition of Chinese techniques."

Acupuncture treatments have lowered blood pressure in some patients and in certain instances

have effectively treated a disorder called cardiac ischemia, which is caused by an inadequate blood supply to heart muscle cells.

To follow the nervous system routes affected by acupuncture, the researchers first used a chemical called bradykinin to stimulate nerves that increase blood pressure in cats. The substance is produced when the body reacts to infections by producing inflammation, and generally its blood pressure effects are curbed by the endorphin system.

Insertion of acupuncture needles at key pressure points have been found to reduce the ability of bradykinin to raise blood pressure.

Then, the scientists injected a drug called naloxone into the cats' bloodstream, negating the effects of the acupuncture probes. Blood pressure and heart pumping action then increased.

Since naloxone blocks the effects of the endorphin system on the areas of the brain that regulate blood pressure, the researchers concluded that acupuncture worked by stimulating the cats' natural endorphins.

The study is part of a number of collaborations between Chinese and Western doctors to understand the physical mechanisms of techniques that have been used for some 3,000 years.

An expert panel convened by the National Institutes of Health concluded in late 1997 that most Western research on acupuncture is too scant to merit recommending its use in treating many medical problems. But it did report there's substantial evidence that acupuncture can help relieve nausea after surgery and chemotherapy and during pregnancy and also may help alleviate pain and aid stroke rehabilitation.

Longhurst said his team will now try to determine which nerve cells in the endorphin system are being stimulated by acupuncture and whether any other parts of the nervous system may contribute to acupuncture's effects on the cardiovascular system.



BODY PIERCING

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