

## **ACUPUNCTURE & Oriental Medicine**

### **What is... Oriental Medicine?**

Also known as Chinese medicine, Oriental medicine is a complete medical system that has been used to diagnose, treat and prevent illness for thousands of years. It is sometimes referred to as energy medicine, and it differs from Western medicine in some critical philosophical ways.

Western medicine is based on the Cartesian philosophy that the body represents one functioning system and the mind another --and the spirit is not really considered at all. While it accepts that the mind and body may affect each other, disease is considered either physical or mental, and organs are viewed as somewhat separate and distinct from one another. Oriental Medicine is based on Taoist beliefs, and sees the body more as an integrated whole. Each organ is believed to have a mental, physical, and spiritual function that cannot be considered -- or treated -- separately.

The goal of the practitioner is to bring the body back into a state of balance by working with its energy and flow. Taoist philosophy beliefs dictated that there was to be no cutting open of the body -- as a result, Oriental medicine is much less invasive than Western medicine. Acupuncture is the most widely practiced and accepted Oriental medicine procedure in the United States.

We offer acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine as one of our therapeutic modalities for our patients to complement the other therapies available at the Center.

### **Acupuncture: What is it?**

Acupuncture is a method of encouraging the body to promote natural healing and to improve functioning. This is done by inserting needles or, if needed applying heat or electrical stimulation, at very precise acupuncture points. Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese procedure that according to records has been in existence for perhaps as much as 10,000 years. The first Chinese Medicine text, the *Nei Jing*, was published 5,000 years ago in China. Acupuncture made its official appearance in the U.S. in 1971 when an article by J. Reston was published in the *New York Times* describing his personal experience with acupuncture. While in Beijing reporting on a Ping-Pong tournament, he underwent an emergency appendectomy. Acupuncture was used as surgical anesthesia and to relieve post-operative pain.

### **How does Acupuncture Work?**

The classical Chinese explanation is that channels of energy run in regular patterns through the body and over its surface. These energy channels, called meridians, are like rivers flowing through the body to irrigate and nourish the tissues. According to Chinese medicine, all living things have energy meridians, including humans, animals, and plants. An obstruction in the movement of these energy rivers is like a dam that backs up, or a deficiency in any meridian cause weakness in other meridians and internal organs.

The meridians can be influenced by needling the acupuncture points, unblocking the obstructions and re-establishing the regular flow through the meridians. Acupuncture treatments can therefore help the body's internal organs to correct imbalances in digestion, absorption, and energy production, and in the circulation of energy through the meridians.

The modern scientific explanation is that needling the acupuncture points stimulates the nervous system to release chemicals in the muscles, spinal cord, and brain. These chemicals, called endorphins, 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.

The improved energy and biochemical balance produced by acupuncture results in stimulating the body's natural healing abilities, and in promoting physical and emotional well being.

Acupuncture is a very old medical art which is used for the promotion of health and well being, prevention of illness, and treatment of various medical conditions. While acupuncture is often associated with pain control, it has much broader applications as well. It is a truly holistic healing modality.

The World Health Organization recognizes the use of acupuncture, as a sole or adjunctive treatment of a wide range of medical problems, including:

- Digestive disorders: gastritis and hyperacidity, spastic colon, constipation, diarrhea, nausea.
- Respiratory disorder: sinusitis, sore throat, bronchitis, asthma, and recurrent chest infections.
- Neurological and Muscular disorders: headaches, facial tics, neck pain, rib neuritis, frozen shoulder, tennis elbow, tendonitis, low back pain, sciatica, osteoarthritis.
- Urinary, menstrual, and reproductive problems.
- Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Symptoms

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- Smoking Withdrawal
- Hypertension
- Physical problems related to tension and stress

### **About Acupuncture Treatments:**

Acupuncture needles are very thin, solid, and made from stainless steel. Since these needles are solid and the point is smooth, insertion of the needles is not as painful as injections or blood draws. Most patients feel only minimal or no pain as the needles are inserted: there is little sensation once they are in place. Sterile, disposable needles are used to eliminate the risk of infection for the treatments. The risk of bruising or skin irritation is less than when using a hollow needle.

There are few side effects from acupuncture. Occasionally, the original symptoms will worsen for a few days or there may be changes in sleep, appetite, or other bodily functions. It is common to experience deep relaxation or even mild disorientation immediately following the first one or two treatments, but this sensation passes quickly.

The number of treatments required varies according to the purpose of the treatment. Chronic, long-standing conditions may require one to two treatments per week for several months while for health maintenance and prevention only four sessions a year may be needed.

### **What to Do the Day of a Treatment?**

To enhance the value of a treatment, the following guidelines are important:

- Do not eat an unusually large meal immediately before or after your treatment.
- Do not over-exercise, engage in sexual activity, or consume alcoholic beverages within 6 hours before or after the treatment.
- Plan your activities so that after the treatment, you can get some rest, or at least not have to be working at top performance. This is especially important for the first few visits.
- Continue to take any prescription medicines as directed by your regular doctor. Substance abuse (drugs or alcohol), especially in the week prior to treatment, will seriously interfere with the effectiveness of acupuncture treatments.
- Remember to keep good mental or written notes of what your response is to the treatment. This is important for your doctor to know so that the follow-up treatments can be designed to best help you.

### **Is Acupuncture Covered by Health Insurance?**

Some insurance companies currently cover acupuncture costs while other companies do not yet recognize the value of acupuncture. You can help by insisting that your insurance company offer you reimbursement for medically indicated acupuncture treatments before you accept their policy.

### **Does Acupuncture Really Work?**

In the past 5,000 years, more people have been successfully treated with acupuncture than with all other health modalities combined. Today, acupuncture is practiced widely in Asia, the former Soviet Union, and in Europe. It is now being used more and more in America. Acupuncture treatments can be used with conventional Western medicine, osteopathic or chiropractic adjustments, and homeopathic or herbal prescriptions. Acupuncture has been successful used on cats, dogs, horses, and other animals, who obviously do not understand or believe in the process that helps them get better. This demonstrates that there is more to acupuncture than just the placebo effect, that is, "believing" that the treatment will work. While a neutral attitude ("I don't know if I really believe in this.") will not block the treatment results, a negative attitude may hinder the effects of acupuncture or any other treatment. A positive mental attitude towards healing and wellness, however, may reinforce the effects of any treatment received.

**If you'd like more information on acupuncture or Oriental medicine, contact the American Association of Oriental Medicine by calling (301)941-1064 or visiting [www.aom.org](http://www.aom.org).**

Acupuncture Fee    \$65.00 per session