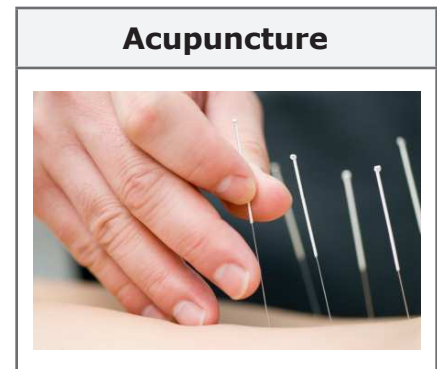


Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a part of traditional Chinese medicine and is among the oldest healing practices in the world. It is used to restore and maintain health through the stimulation of specific points on the body.

Acupuncture has been practiced in China and other Asian countries for thousands of years. It is now gaining wide acceptance in the United States, and a recent study showed that 3.1 million adults had received acupuncture in the previous year. Scientists are studying the effectiveness of acupuncture for a wide range of conditions. The National Cancer Institute now acknowledges use of acupuncture as a complementary (not in place of) treatment for cancer patients. Relatively few complications have been reported from the use of acupuncture when delivered properly by a trained, qualified practitioner.



Acupuncture Theory

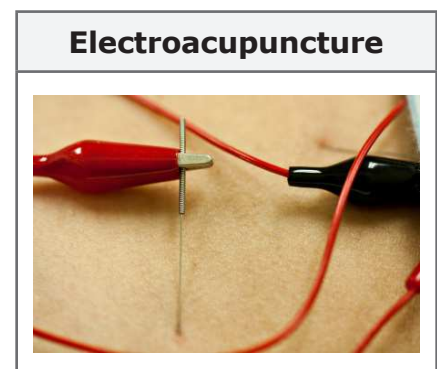
The basic theory of acupuncture is that the body is seen as a delicate balance of two opposing and inseparable forces: yin and yang. Yin represents cold, slow or passive aspects of the person, while yang represents hot, excited or active aspects. The major theory of acupuncture is that health is achieved through balancing yin and yang and that disease is caused by an imbalance of the two. This imbalance then leads to a blockage in the flow of qi (vital energy) along pathways known as meridians. Qi can be unblocked, according to Chinese medicine, by using acupuncture at certain points on the body that connect with these meridians.

Types of Acupuncture

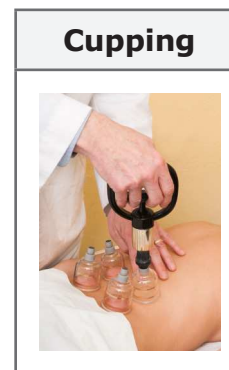
The acupuncture technique that has been studied the most scientifically is the penetration of the skin with thin, solid, metallic needles that are inserted by the practitioner.

Other acupuncture techniques reported by the National Institute of Health include the following:

- **Electroacupuncture:** A procedure in which pulses of weak electrical current are sent through acupuncture needles into acupoints in the skin.
- **Trigger Point Acupuncture:** The placing of acupuncture needles in a place on the skin that is away from the painful part of the body. Trigger points have to do with referred pain, pain that is not felt at the site of injury but is sent along nerves and felt elsewhere in the body.
- **Laser Acupuncture:** The use of a weak laser beam instead of an acupuncture needle to stimulate an acupoint.



- **Microwave Acupuncture:** The use of a microwave device attached to an acupuncture needle to deliver microwave radiation to an acupoint.
- **Acupressure:** A type of massage therapy in which the fingers are used to press on an acupoint. In cancer patients, acupressure has been used to control symptoms such as pain or nausea and vomiting.
- **Moxibustion:** A type of heat therapy in which an herb is burned above the body to warm a meridian at an acupoint and increase the flow of blood and qi. The herb may be placed directly on the skin, held close to the skin for several minutes, or placed on the tip of an acupuncture needle.
- **Cupping:** A procedure in which a rounded glass cup is warmed and placed upside down over an area of the body, making a vacuum that holds the cup to the skin. Cupping is used to increase the flow of blood and qi. It is believed to open up the skin's pores and allow toxins to leave the body.



Acupuncture Side Effects and Risks

Relatively few complications from the use of acupuncture have been reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in light of the millions of people treated each year and the number of acupuncture needles used. Complications most often reported resulted from inadequate sterilization of needles and from improper delivery of treatments. The FDA regulates acupuncture needles for use by licensed practitioners, requiring that needles be manufactured and labeled according to certain standards. For example, the FDA requires that needles be sterile, nontoxic and labeled for single use by qualified practitioners only.

Acupuncture Visits

During your first acupuncture visits, the acupuncturist will ask you about your health condition, lifestyle and behavior. The acupuncturist will want to obtain a complete picture of your treatment needs and behaviors that may contribute to your condition. Inform the acupuncturist about all treatments or medications (prescription or nonprescription, including herbal and dietary supplements) you are taking and all medical conditions you have.

After listening to your history, the acupuncturist will determine where to apply acupuncture treatment on your body. If needles are used, the needles are metallic, solid and hair-thin. Most people feel minimal to no pain as the needles are inserted. Some people feel energized by acupuncture treatments, while others feel relaxed. Treatment may take place over a period of several weeks or more.

Precaution

Practitioners should use a new set of disposable needles taken from a sealed package for each patient and should swab treatment sites with alcohol or another disinfectant before inserting needles to protect against infection.

Acupuncture for Cancer Patients

After clinical studies, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) reports the following acceptance of acupuncture for cancer patients as a complementary and alternative therapy.

- **Effect of Acupuncture on the Immune System:** Human studies on the effect of acupuncture on the immune system of cancer patients showed that it improved immune system response.
- **Effect of Acupuncture on Pain:** In clinical studies, acupuncture reduced the amount of pain in some cancer patients. In one study, most of the patients treated with acupuncture were able to stop taking drugs for pain relief or to take smaller doses. The findings from these studies are not considered strong, however, because of weaknesses in study design and size. Studies using strict scientific methods are needed to prove how acupuncture affects pain.

- **Effect of Acupuncture on Nausea and Vomiting Caused by Chemotherapy:** The strongest evidence of the effect of acupuncture has come from clinical trials on the use of acupuncture to relieve nausea and vomiting. Several types of clinical trials using different acupuncture methods showed acupuncture reduced nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy, surgery and morning sickness. It appears to be more effective in preventing vomiting than in reducing nausea.
- **Effect of Acupuncture on Cancer and Symptoms (Other Than Nausea) Caused by Cancer Treatment:** Clinical trials are studying the effects of acupuncture on cancer and symptoms caused by cancer treatment, including weight loss, cough, chest pain, fever, anxiety, depression, night sweats, hot flashes, dry mouth, speech problems and fluid in the arms or legs. Studies have shown that, for many patients, treatment with acupuncture either relieves symptoms or keeps them from getting worse.

Finding a Qualified Acupuncturist

Healthcare providers are a good resource for referral to local acupuncturists. Check a practitioner's credentials for adequate training and licensing. More than 40 states and the District of Columbia have laws regulating acupuncture practice (see www.acufinder.com for an online database of licensed acupuncture providers). The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (www.nccaom.org) certifies practitioners of acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine. Most states require this certification. Although a license does not ensure quality of care, it does indicate that the practitioner meets certain standards regarding the knowledge and use of acupuncture.

Additional Information:
