

# ACUPUNCTURE: TARGETING CHRONIC PAIN

## What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a medical art that has flourished in China and throughout the Orient for at least 2,500 years. Acupuncture is one of the five major areas of therapeutics within the field of traditional Chinese medicine.

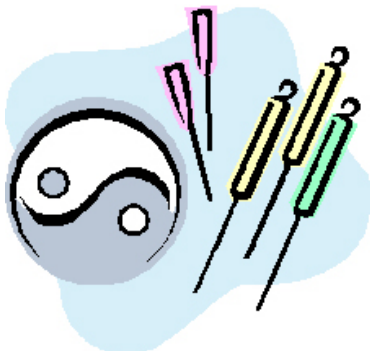
## How does it work?

The ancient Chinese believed that there is universal life energy called *Chi* present in every living creature. This energy is said to circulate throughout the body along specific pathways that are called meridians.

Acupuncture involves the insertion of fine needles into points located along your body's meridians. The belief is that an imbalance or blockage in the energy flow of the body causes illnesses. By inserting needles at the correct points, the imbalance can be rectified. So, acupuncture stimulation of points along the meridians regulates flow of *Chi* in the body, and thereby enhances health.

## Is there a scientific explanation?

So far, modern research has described various physiological shifts following acupuncture, such as beneficial changes in the body's own natural painkillers, anti-inflammatory agents, immune system functions and hormonal activity. Despite the powerful technology available today, even the modern physicists cannot explain how this ancient healing therapy works.



## Is it safe?

When performed by a properly trained and licensed practitioner, acupuncture is safe and effective. Licensed acupuncturists know the human anatomy well, and insert needles in a safe fashion. The instruments used to penetrate the skin are either pre-sterilized and disposable after a single use, or disinfected and sterilized in an autoclave, as surgical and dental instruments are, after each use. Bleeding rarely occurs. Even then the amount is minimal and in no way dangerous.



## Don't the needles hurt?

Most people who have had acupuncture would describe it as virtually painless or far less painful than plucking out a hair. The sensations that follow range from nothing at all, to mild tingling, to slight numbness, to electrical pulsations in areas distant from the site of insertion. All these sensations usually subside once the needles are removed.

## Should I tell my doctor?

If you are receiving treatment from your doctor then it makes sense to tell him or her about your plans to have acupuncture. Your doctor should be consulted regarding any change of medications, or any herbal medications that you might be taking in addition to your regular medications.

## How do I choose an acupuncturist?

Different states have different licensing requirements for regulation of acupuncturists. In some states, a person with the required background must also pass an exam given by the National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), before they are authorized as Licensed Acupuncturists. NCCAOM certification indicates that a person has met national standards for the safe and competent practice of acupuncture.

## Is acupuncture effective for treating migraines?

Yes. Acupuncture is often effective for migraine headaches. Migraine headaches are often a complex condition with a number of different causative factors. All these factors may need to be addressed, together with receiving acupuncture treatment, in order to get the best result. But acupuncture is still often very helpful. And no, the procedure itself is not painful.

## Is acupuncture effective in treating low back pain?

Acupuncture can be very effective in the treatment of low back pain. Low back pain can be caused by many things, so it wouldn't be right to speak too broadly about acupuncture's effect in low back pain without being a little bit specific. The simplest perspective might be to say that acupuncture can be helpful by reducing swelling and inflammation, and by doing so, relieving pain.



## Conditions Recommended for Acupuncture by the World Health Organization (W.H.O)

### Respiratory Diseases

- Acute sinusitis
- Acute rhinitis
- Common cold
- Acute tonsillitis

### Bronchopulmonary Diseases

- Acute bronchitis
- Bronchial asthma

### Eye Disorders

- Acute conjunctivitis
- Cataract (without complications)
- Myopia
- Central retinitis

### Disorders of the Mouth Cavity

- Toothache
- Pain after tooth extraction
- Gingivitis
- Pharyngitis

### Orthopedic Disorders

- Periarthritis humeroscapularis
- Tennis elbow
- Sciatica
- Low back pain
- Rheumatoid arthritis

### Gastrointestinal Disorders

- Spasm of the esophagus and cardia
- Hiccups
- Gastroparesis
- Acute and chronic gastritis
- Gastric hyperacidity
- Chronic duodenal ulcer
- Acute and chronic colitis
- Acute bacterial dysentery
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Paralytic ileus

### Neurologic Disorders

- Headache
- Migraine
- Trigeminal neuralgia
- Facial paralysis
- Paralysis after apoplectic fit
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Paralysis caused by poliomyelitis
- Meniere's syndrome
- Neurogenic bladder dysfunction
- Nocturnal enuresis
- Intercostal neuralgia