

## Acupuncture

- What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is the most often practiced component of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) which is widely recognized as an integral part of the longest existing continuous medical system practiced in the world.

Contrary to popular Western belief, acupuncture is not just a system for inserting very fine needles into specific body points to alleviate pain.

Acupuncture is indeed a complete medical protocol, an ancient medicine methodology focused on correcting imbalances of energy in the body. From its inception in China more than 3,500 years ago, acupuncture has been used traditionally to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases, as well as to improve general health.

- How acupuncture works?

When acupuncture is done, very thin and flexible disposable needles are inserted in specific points of the body known as acupuncture points; these points are distributed following a precise location along different channels or meridians, the acupuncture channels. There are 12 pairs of meridians known as the regular acupuncture meridians which are named by the internal organs to which they are connected and 8 extraordinary meridians.

On these twelve meridians, there are nearly 2,000 points that can be used in acupuncture, with around 200 points being most frequently used by traditional acupuncturists. During an individual treatment, one to 20 needles may be used, depending on which meridian points are chosen.

Life is a process at work every moment, directing thousands of activities including sensations, awareness, emotions, breathing, circulation, etc.; all these activities and life in general is sustained by what is known in TCM as Qi - pronounced "chi" - or vital energy. Qi circulates within the

acupuncture channels that lie just beneath the skin. Each of these channels corresponds to a specific physiological system and inner organ, forming an energetic map of the body that provides unique insight into the state of an individual's health.

A balanced and harmonious flow of Qi is essential for a true health. When there is a blockage or stagnation of Qi a disharmony, imbalance and eventually a disease may ensue.

What acupuncture does is to restore the harmonious circulation of Qi and blood, the balance and unity to the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of being and ultimately restoring health.

- What to expect during an acupuncture session?

During your first visit you should anticipate to expend between 60 to 90 minutes during that time. It is during this first visit that we collect all the information we need to assess your condition (s) and to be able to customize your treatment. You will be asked several questions related to your current symptoms, lifestyle and general state of health, your medical history and that of close family, your nutritional habits, your sleep patterns and most importantly your emotional state.

Following the interview, we proceed to feel your pulses on both wrists for about two to three minutes, noticing their quality, rhythm and frequency. We will also examine your tongue, its color, structure, coating, and size. All of this information together with your responses and our observations during the interview will give us a very close picture about the general and particular status of your energy flow and help us to determine the underlying pattern of disharmony that explain your symptoms and be used to customize your protocol of treatment.

For the treatment you will be asked to lie down on an examination table and relax. Fine and flexible disposable needles will be inserted in selected acupuncture points along the acupuncture meridians; this should not be painful at all, but a slight sensation when the needle initially meets the acupuncture point, often described as a pulling or dull ache, feeling of heaviness or tingling can be felt. This sensation quickly fades, bringing a feeling of comfort and relaxation.

After the needles are placed, they will be left in place for about 40 to 45 minutes and then withdrawn.

- How often you should receive treatment and for how long?

How many visits you will need varies from person to person and case to case. Each patient is unique and all depend on your condition (s); the more acute a problem, the faster the results. Long lasting conditions may take a while to resolve. Typically, you will be asked to come in twice, if not three times a week for 3-4 weeks until positive change is well underway and then treatments are tapered accordingly. In some instances, you will receive instructions for a particular dietary recommendation, Qigong exercises or other activities that may seem unrelated to your condition (s), but they are indeed part of your customized treatment, we encourage you to be involved in your own treatment and follow those adjuvant recommendations as this will enhance and further your healing.

Once progress becomes apparent you may not need to come as frequently. For general health and wellbeing, it is advisable to have four treatments a year coinciding with the season changes.

- Precautions

Although, acupuncture is extremely safe and there is no danger whatsoever, there are few instances in which acupuncture is not advised or should be performed with extreme care.

- Patients with a diagnosis of hemophilia.
- If the patient is pregnant - certain acupuncture points and needle manipulations should not be used during pregnancy
- If the patient has a severe psychotic condition or is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.