

AURICULOTHERAPY

What is Auriculotherapy?

Auriculotherapy, also known as auricular acupuncture, is a healthcare modality based on the stimulation of the auricle or the external surface of the ear for the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions in other parts of the body.

Brief history of Auriculotherapy.

Auriculotherapy was first addressed in China over 2000 years ago. The earliest records that we know of its practice go back to the Yellow Emperor Classic of Internal Medicine, a compilation of acupuncture procedures that were in practice in 500 BC. In this extensive text, specific acupoints on the external ear are used to diagnose and relieve certain disorders. However, nowadays, Auriculotherapy is practiced in China differently and is based on France's most recent discoveries during the 1950s. The current practice of Auriculotherapy shows a complete organization of ear reflex points that can be used to relieve many health problems. In the west, the earliest references to ear treatments go back to medical records from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome. A trail of evidence of using auricular stimulation to treat sciatica and back pain can be followed from these Persian records through medieval Europe to modern France. Since the 1950s, clinical practitioners in other parts of Europe, Asia, and North and South America have been using specific ear points that can alleviate many health problems.

How Auriculotherapy works?

· **Microsystem.**

The auricular acupoints system is one of several Microsystems of the human body and should be viewed as a self-contained system within the whole system, pointing to the Oriental thinking that there is a systemic correspondence of each part to the whole; in other words, the external ear is like a microcosm of the whole body - the macrocosm -, with one part of the body representing the entire body. Microsystems have been reported for foot reflexology, hand reflexology, face acupuncture, scalp acupuncture, and iridology.

· **Remote reflex response.**

Every Microsystem manifest neurological reflexes that are connected with parts of the body remote from the anatomical location of that Microsystem; reflexes that are both diagnostic and therapeutic when a stimulus – needle puncture, massage, pressure, electrical stimulation, magnets, seeds, etc. – is applied to the specific reflex area.

· **Somatotopic inversion.**

Soma means body, and **topic** refers to the mapping of the terrain of an area. It was Dr. Paul Nogier, 1950, who first originated the concept of an inverted fetus map of the auricle, where there is an orderly anatomical arrangement of points representing the whole body, with the lower parts of the body represented on the top of the ear, the head areas toward the bottom and the rest of the body in between.

· **Bidirectional pathways reflexes.**

Ear changes respond to pathologic changes in the body; there is a decrease in the electro-dermal skin resistance in the corresponding auricular point, electro-dermal conductance of that area increases, as well as the tenderness, with possible observable cutaneous changes. Pathological organs will project to the corresponding ear region, eliciting all or some of the manifestations mentioned above. In turn, the ear stimulation of that particular related area will relieve the pathology in the corresponding body part.

· **Role of Endorphins.**

The stimulation of auricular acupoints appears to cause the systemic release of endorphins, the natural pain relieving biochemicals found in the pituitary gland and other parts of the central nervous system. The release of these substances in the bloodstream by stimulating active auricle points is one of the theories that researchers use to explain how Auriculotherapy and acupuncture serve to relieve pain, considering that the administration of the opiate antagonist naloxone partially blocks the analgesic effects of Auriculotherapy and acupuncture.

Health conditions treated with Auriculotherapy.

The stimulation of ear acupoints is an effective treatment. Even though pain relief is the more immediate effect, it does more than relieving the experience of pain. Auriculotherapy can facilitate the body's internal healing process by treating the deeper, underlying condition and not just the symptomatic representation of the problem by affecting physiological changes that trigger and facilitate

the natural self-regulating homeostatic mechanisms of the body.

Some of the health conditions that can be treated by Auriculotherapy are; headaches, dizziness, vertigo. It can also be used for biophysical balance and stabilization of mood through the natural release of dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins with a significant reduction of anxiety, irritability, agitation, and the elimination of stress, dermatitis, uterine bleeding, digestive disorders, constipation, hypertension, impotence, back pain, other musculoskeletal disorders, hypothyroidism, hyperthyroidism, drug abuse, and other addictions, etc. Auriculotherapy works best when implemented as part of a multidisciplinary complement of multiple treatment approaches as body acupuncture, massage therapy, etc.

How is Auriculotherapy performed?

· **Duration of a typical treatment session?**

A typical Auriculotherapy session may last between 15 - 30 minutes. It is essential to consider that the first session may last longer due to the intake evaluation of the patient.

· **How many treatment sessions are needed?**

The nature of the health condition, its severity, and history will dictate the number of sessions. Generally speaking, most patients will see a moderate reduction of their symptoms by the fourth or sixth session, experiencing a significant improvement by the eighth to twelfth session.

· **How often are the treatment sessions performed?**

Some health conditions may require daily treatment due to their severity. However, a typical schedule consists of two treatments per week for two or three weeks, then once a

week for a few more weeks. As the health condition improves, the patient may receive a once-a-month treatment until the condition has healed and the symptoms or the medical disorder becomes less pronounced.

· **How is Auriculotherapy performed?**

There are different methods of stimulation of the auricular points in order to achieve its benefits:

- Massage, general massage of the external auricle, or specific massage of specific auricle acupoints.
- Auriculopressure.
- Auriculoacupuncture.
- Auricular electro acupuncture stimulation.
- Transcutaneous auricular stimulation.
- Semi-permanent auricular procedures. Among these, the most used are ear magnets, ear pellets or ear seeds, press needles, and ear tacks.

· **How long do the benefits of Auriculotherapy last?**

The range of responses to an Auriculotherapy session is quite varied. Still, it is not unusual that a patient suffering from severe pain will notice mild to marked reduction of their complaint on the very first session. This reduction in their pain experience can improve for the next several hours after treatment. Still, the benefits often begin to subside a few days after the initial treatment. With each successive treatment, the degree of pain relief usually becomes more and more pronounced and the duration of pain relief starts extending from days to several weeks. When using Auriculotherapy to treat smoking cessation and drug detoxification, the benefits may last for several weeks after the first treatments.

Are there any contraindications for using Auriculotherapy?

Auriculotherapy should not be performed on pregnant women during the first two months of pregnancy. After that, only on very particular points for pain relief, if needed. The electrical stimulation of auricular acupoints should be avoided on a patient with a pace maker and in children under seven years of age.

Side effects associated with Auriculotherapy.

One of the diagnostic features of Auriculotherapy is an increased tenderness of active auricular points and sometimes soreness of the ear points can remain for up to an hour after treatment. Seldomly may one experience a slight allergic reaction to the tape used to hold the seed, the pellet, seed, magnet, or needle to the skin of the ear.