
Acupuncture

Acupuncture is an ancient form of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). It's based on the belief that life energy (called Qi) flows through the body. It's thought that health is at its best when Qi is balanced and freely flowing.

Improved energy flow

Acupuncturists focus on the vital energy of Qi (pronounced "chee"). They believe that Qi flows through a complex group of pathways called meridians or channels. Thin needles are put into the body at precise points that run along these meridians. The points are called acupoints. This needle placement is believed to support the body in unblocking channels and improving the flow of Qi. Different acupoints may have different health effects. In some cases, certain herbs are burned in a controlled manner near or over an acupoint. This is called moxibustion.

Acupuncturists are trained to find problems with the flow of Qi early to prevent future problems. They may do this by asking health questions, checking the pulse at the wrist, and looking at the tongue. This helps them find health issues sometimes even before a person can tell that something is wrong.

Why get this care?

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has said that acupuncture may be helpful for treating certain conditions. These include addiction withdrawal, pain, upset stomach (nausea), hay fever, high blood pressure, and other health problems. But acupuncturists may treat a wider range of conditions. These include anxiety disorders or depression, digestive problems, headaches, and much more.

Questions for the acupuncturist

Before you decide to have acupuncture to treat a health problem, talk with an acupuncturist. Asking some of these questions may help you make an informed decision:

- What is your training? How long have you been practicing?
- What risks do I need to know about?
- Have you treated problems like mine? What was the outcome?
- What will a typical visit be like?
- Do you use disposable needles?
- Will I feel the needles?
- How long will treatment take and how much will it cost?
- Will my insurance pay for your services?

To learn more

For more information, visit these websites:

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- [American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine at www.aaaomonline.org](http://www.aaaomonline.org)
 - [National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine at www.nccaom.org](http://www.nccaom.org)
 - [American Academy of Medical Acupuncture at www.medicalacupuncture.org](http://www.medicalacupuncture.org)