

## ACUPUNCTURE

### ***What is acupuncture?***

The term "acupuncture" describes a family of procedures involving the stimulation of different points on the body using a variety of techniques. The acupuncture technique that has been most often studied scientifically involves penetrating the skin with sterile, thin, solid, metallic needles that are manipulated by the hands or by electrical stimulation.



Practiced in China and other Asian countries for thousands of years, acupuncture is one of the key components of traditional Chinese medicine. Many Western practitioners view the acupuncture points as places to stimulate nerves, muscles and connective tissue. This stimulation appears to boost the activity of your body's natural painkillers and increase blood flow.

### ***What is acupuncture used for and how could acupuncture help me?***

Acupuncture has been shown to be helpful for many conditions, including addiction, pain and nausea. Acupuncture is also used to treat many other conditions, but this has not been fully tested by scientific studies. What is known is that acupuncture is a safe, relaxing treatment.



### ***What are the risks?***

Relatively few complications have been reported from the use of acupuncture. However, acupuncture can cause potentially serious side effects if not delivered properly by a qualified practitioner. If you have received a diagnosis from a doctor, you may wish to ask your doctor whether acupuncture might help.

### ***Who performs acupuncture?***

A professionally trained acupuncturist, medical doctor or acupuncture student in training may perform acupuncture. In the state of Massachusetts all acupuncturists must be licensed.

### ***What should I expect during treatment?***

During your first office visit, the practitioner may ask you at length about your health condition, lifestyle, and behavior. The practitioner will want to obtain a complete picture of your treatment needs and behaviors that may contribute to your condition. S/he will also examine your tongue and check your pulse carefully in both wrists. Inform the practitioner about all treatments or medications you are taking and all medical conditions you have. Treatment may take place over a period of several weeks or more.

Acupuncture needles are sterile, metallic, solid, and hair-thin. People experience acupuncture differently, but most feel no or minimal pain as the needles are inserted. Between 5 and 20 needles are used in a typical treatment. In most cases, the needles will remain in place for 10 to 20 minutes while you lie still and relax. Some people feel energized by treatment, while others feel relaxed. It is important to seek treatment from a qualified acupuncture practitioner and to talk to your doctor about receiving acupuncture treatments.

Information adapted from:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/acupuncture/MY00946>

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture>