



# Acupuncture for Addiction Recovery

by Shoshanna Katzman



**A**cupuncture is an ancient form of holistic medicine that originated in Chinese approximately 3,000 years ago. Acupuncture has been used throughout the centuries to attain vibrant health and well-being. It has been known for successfully treating a wide range of physical conditions such as muscular pain, headaches, osteoarthritis, chronic stress, hot flashes, infertility and gastric disturbance.

Auricular or ear acupuncture is a commonly chosen method to help eliminate substance abuse issues and support the process of addiction recovery. Acupuncturists insert thin needles into various points on the skin of the external ear to ease withdrawal symptoms and reduce cravings.

The National Detoxification Association (NADA) has established an acupuncture treatment protocol to specifically help people with addiction and provide acupuncture training to medical and mental health professionals. Their standardized treatment lasts approximately 30 minutes while the person is relaxing in a sitting or prone position. It is available at a variety of acupuncture centers along with other medical and drug treatment facilities throughout the United States.

## The following five points on the ear are included in the NADA protocol:

- ▲ Lung Point: strengthens energetic function of the lungs and alleviates grief.
- ▲ Liver Point: strengthens energetic function of the liver, releases toxins from the liver and blood, decreases aggression, balances emotions and relieves pain.
- ▲ Kidney Point: strengthens energetic function of the kidneys, builds energetic health of the vital organs, releases fear and bolsters will power.
- ▲ Shen Men Point: calms the heart and pacifies the spirit, relieves anxiety and regulate sleep.
- ▲ Sympathetic Point: balances and soothes the sympathetic nervous system, promotes relaxation and decreases stress.

Acupuncture to eliminate addiction is believed to affect the dopaminergic system in the brain. Medical professionals have observed that people with alcohol and hard drug addiction (such as morphine and cocaine) typically have high levels of dopamine deposits – a substance responsible for the euphoric feeling. Acupuncture decreases the amount of dopamine release when the drug is used, therein reducing the positive reinforcement properties of drugs.

Acupuncture works for addiction due to its promoting the production of dopamine and raising the levels of endorphin in the brain. This combination is significant for a person going through the process of addiction recovery. It is especially helpful for managing the physical and emotional pain of opiate addiction and withdrawal where the presence of body and joint pains can be devastating.

The acupuncture experience induces feelings of pleasure while simultaneously reducing the need for drugs. Treatment for addiction is often combined with other forms of support such as psychotherapy, group counseling, 12-Step Programs and support groups. It is also supported with other complementary treatments such as art therapy, music therapy, meditation, nutritional counseling or exercise programs. If this is something that you or a loved one needs, think about adding acupuncture into your strategy to eliminate substance abuse from your life.

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