

Modulation of Pain

by Shoshanna Katzman



Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese medicine technique used to treat a variety of pain conditions. It works through the insertion of needles into specific locations on the skin known as acupuncture points. The story goes that it was first discovered when a Chinese soldier's shoulder pain was gone after being pierced in the leg by an arrow. Interestingly, the original needles were made of stone and shaped like an arrow.

Today, an acupuncturist uses ultra-thin stainless-steel needles that are surprisingly painless. The acupuncture experience is typically relaxing, soothing and deeply healing. Both then and now, acupuncture has been known to ameliorate pain by opening energetic blockages within the area treated and throughout the body. Upon doing so, it positively influences the body's tissues, glands, vital organs and promotes overall bodily function.

Acupuncture modulates pain and promotes healing through increasing Qi and blood flow, boosting immunity and reducing inflammation. It balances and calms the emotions which helps one handle their pain better.

In 1971, the American public first heard about acupuncture when New York Times journalist James Reston received acupuncture successfully to control his pain after an appendectomy while visiting China with President Nixon. Henry Kissinger also played a role in this story when he mentioned the journalist's experience and Nixon's newfound interest in acupuncture during a press briefing after this China trip. Not too long afterward, the first acupuncture school opened in Boston in 1975.

Another major step toward its acceptance in the United States happened in 1996 when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved acupuncture needles as a Class II medical device. This came with the requirement that they be steel, solid, sterile, nontoxic, single-use and properly labeled. Acupuncture has been known throughout the ages to come with a low risk of complications or side effects when provided by a qualified licensed acupuncturist.

Treatment is covered by many major health insurances and the two major national acupuncture organizations are working together to get acupuncture covered by Medicare. Today, approximately 15,000 acupuncturists provide their services in acupuncture centers, physical therapy offices, pain clinics, multi-disciplinary practices and other medical facilities such as physician's offices, hospitals and rehabilitation centers from coast to coast. Something that was thought of as underground in the seventies is now taking its rightful place in modern medicine.

Whether acute or chronic, acupuncture has been known to treat head, neck, shoulder, back, hip, abdominal, knee, hand and heel pain effectively. This includes but is not

limited to migraines, sinus pressure, sciatica, gastritis, menstrual cramps, PMS, sports injuries, TMJ, carpal tunnel, repetitive strain disorders, myofascial pain and overall joint pain.

Research studies have established that acupuncture releases natural chemicals such as pain-relieving endorphins and neurotransmitters that control nerve impulses. An acupuncturist typically recommends weekly treatments, although this varies depending on the severity of the symptoms, how long one has been suffering and how quickly one's body responds.

Healing is quick for some, but gradual for others. Traditionally, it is said to take one month of treatment for each year that a symptom has existed. The most important thing is to be patient and trust your body's ability to heal and release pain. Keep in mind that a treatment such as acupuncture works by pushing a symptom out rather than burying it deep within the body. Accordingly, symptoms may temporarily get worse before getting better. This is the natural process of how the body heals itself.

The most important thing is to give your body the time it needs to rebalance and reclaim health and wellness. Just remember that this ancient modality strengthens your body's ability to heal itself. It prods your innate healing capability. Acupuncture clears the way energetically, physically and emotionally for healing to take place. It doesn't hurt to give it a try!

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