

Pain Free Body

by Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., M.S.



Acupuncture is a 2,500-year-old form of Chinese medicine gaining acceptance in the United States today as a viable alternative treatment option.

Its practice in American medicine was rare until 1972 when President Nixon's Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, traveled to China accompanied by the New York Times reporter James Reston. While in China, James Reston was treated with acupuncture for extreme pain following an emergency appendectomy. It was so successful in helping him that he wrote about it in the New York Times upon his return. Since then, widespread interest in acupuncture throughout the United States has developed in leaps and bounds.

The classical explanation of acupuncture is based on the existence of patterns of vital energy or "qi" (pronounced 'chee') that are essential for health. Qi circulates and flows throughout the body within energy pathways called "meridians." There are 12 major meridians that contain 365 acupuncture points. Each meridian is associated with a specific organ system and the acupuncture points within that meridian are used to treat symptoms and conditions related to that system. The basic premise of

Chinese medicine is that disruption in qi flow along these meridians causes dysfunction or disease within the body.

The purpose of acupuncture treatment is to restore balance and healthy energy flow by correcting these qi disruptions. Restoration is accomplished through insertion of hair-thin, solid, metallic needles into the skin with subsequent manual or electrical stimulation. The establishment of proper qi flow through acupuncture, in turn, promotes the proper flow of blood. This dual action is responsible for the enhancement of the body's natural regenerative capabilities.

This ancient healing modality has been studied and researched extensively in Asia and more recently in the United States. The majority of studies have concentrated on the analgesic properties of acupuncture, although this is rapidly changing to include many other conditions. Nonetheless, it still remains that the most frequent usage and conclusive evidence is acupuncture's efficacy in the treatment of pain.

Acupuncture has thus become a widespread treatment option throughout the world. For example, in Germany acupuncture is now covered by state health insurance for low back pain and knee osteoarthritis. This came about due to a 2007 German study of 1,161 subjects that found acupuncture to be more effective than conventional lower back pain treatments.

This study showed reduced intensity of pain, reduced disability due to back pain and improvement in quality of life.

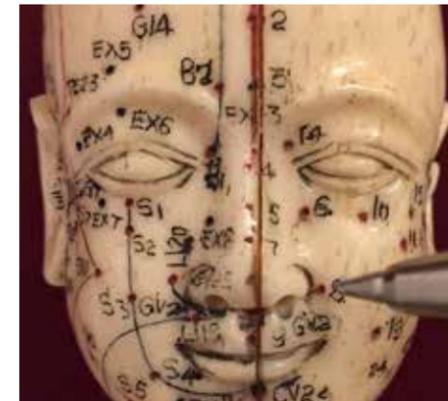
During an initial acupuncture consultation, information is gathered by taking a thorough patient history to determine the root cause of a patient's condition. This is followed by decisions about Chinese medicine diagnosis, treatment principle, course of treatment and point selection. Frequency and duration of treatment is based on factors such as the patient's constitution, severity of condition and how long problem has existed. A typical treatment protocol is 12-15 visits received 1-3 times a week in the beginning with adjustments

according to achieved level of progress.

Musculoskeletal conditions generally come under the Chinese Medicine category of "Bi Syndrome" which affects the body's meridians. The word bi represents painful obstruction that causes pain, numbness, stiffness, lack of sensation or paralysis. These symptoms are treated by applying acupuncture needles in the local area or distal to it usually on the arms, legs, feet, torso, back, buttocks, face, and/or the ear. Scalp acupuncture is also commonly applied for conditions that have an acute or degenerative neurological component, especially when paralysis is involved.

Bi Syndrome comes from imbalances stemming from invasion of the body by the pathogenic influences of wind, cold, dampness or heat. It may also be due to factors such as over-exertion, prolonged inactivity or organ disturbance.

One of the most common diagnoses for a painful condition is "Cold Bi Syndrome" which is associated with reduction of blood flow, alleviation of pain with warmth and worsening of pain with



cold and damp.

Bi syndromes can also be due to disruptions in the circulation of qi and or blood, which relates to an imbalance of yin and yang. For example, a yin type of pain occurs or is aggravated at night and is dull, throbbing, constant, of moderate intensity, chronic and deep. A yang type of pain happens more during the day and is sharp, stabbing, burning, intense, acute, superficial and associated with spasm. Deciding on all of these aspects is extremely important in determining the appropriate treatment principle and plan. One of the

many benefits of acupuncture is that it treats the whole person while simultaneously addressing one's specific pain.

There is a great deal to be learned about this ancient healing art – one that has most certainly "stood the test of time." It is a gentle and holistic approach to achieving a pain free body. The best approach to finding your path toward wellness is to choose a practitioner wisely and open your mind to giving your body the chance to heal itself naturally, while remembering that there are techniques available to maximize one's innate healing capability.

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