

What is Acupuncture?



Acupuncture is a time-tested, safe, natural and drug free health care system that can provide immediate relief and long lasting benefits. It promotes natural healing and can help you return to and stay in a state of optimal health by restoring the proper and continuous flow of vital energy, called Qi (pronounced chee). Qi is characterized by the dynamic interaction of two opposed, yet complimentary energy forces called yin (feminine energy) and yang (masculine energy).

Each includes a portion of the other. Yin and Yang are constantly interacting and changing, and one never exists in isolation from the other. When applied to medicine in general, Western medicine acts upon the Yin of the body, the substance of the body, the actual cells and chemicals.

Traditional Chinese medicine acts on the energy that animates those cells.

According to Chinese tradition, all substances are formed from fire, water, earth, metal, and wood. Fire contains the most yang and water the most yin. The elements are created or destroyed by specific repeated interactions. For example, fire melts metal, metal cuts down wood, wood covers earth, earth absorbs water, and water puts out fire.

Each element is assigned one yin and one yang organ. Under this model, a bad heart (a fire organ) will adversely affect the lungs (a metal organ), which will in turn affect the liver (wood). Each organ has a meridian associated with it containing a series of acupuncture points. Stimulating these points regulates energy flow in the meridians. Overall, it is a closed system in which the excess of energy in one area reduces the energy in another area.

Acupuncture seeks to treat health on the level of Qi. There are pathways in the human body wherein this Qi flows. They are called meridians, or channels. Meridian pathways are like rivers flowing inside the body. Where a river flows it transports life-giving water that provides nourishment to the land, plants and people. Like rivers, where meridian pathways flow, they bring life-giving Qi that provides nourishment to every cell, organ, gland, tissue and muscle in the body.

An obstruction to the flow of Qi is like a dam. When it becomes 'backed up' in one part of the body, the flow becomes restricted in other parts. Hindering the flow of Qi can be detrimental to a person's health, cutting off vital nourishment to the body, organs and glands.

Needles inserted along these meridians influence the Qi that flows to internal organs. It can affect both the structure and function of these organs. Needles can also work on specific areas of pain that may not be associated with internal problems, i.e. sport injuries. A needle inserted near the area of a pulled tendon or overstrained muscle will increase the flow of Qi to that area which removes pain and speeds up the healing process.

What Does an Acupuncturist Do?



During the initial exam a full health history will be taken along with pulse and tongue diagnosis and an appropriate physical exam. This exam may include range of motion and manual muscle testing as well as orthoneuro evaluations. Evaluating the pulse is much more involved than in Western medicine.

A yin and yang pulse is at three locations on each wrist, measured by deep and light-touch pressure. Each of these 12 different pulses corresponds to a specific organ. The information is then organized into a well-structured treatment plan. This enables the practitioner to effectively diagnose and detect any specific imbalances of Qi that may be contributing to a person's health problem(s).

Once the imbalance(s) of Qi are detected, an acupuncturist will place fine, hair-like, sterile needles at specific acupoints along meridian pathways. This safe and painless insertion of the needles can unblock the obstruction, and balance Qi. Once this is done, Qi freely circulates throughout the body providing adequate nourishment to cells, organs, glands, tissues and muscles. This eliminates pain, restores balance and harmony and along with the body's natural ability to heal itself, ultimately leading to optimal health and well-being.

In 1997 the National Institutes of Health consensus statement (based on an expert panel's comprehensive review) concluded that acupuncture is an acceptable treatment for the relief of a wide variety of conditions either when used in conjunction with regular medical treatment or as an acceptable alternative therapy.

The conditions listed by the NIH panel included asthma, carpal tunnel syndrome, fibromyalgia, headache, lower back pain, menstrual cramps, myofascial (muscle) pain, osteoarthritis, tennis elbow and even stroke rehabilitation.

How Does Acupuncture Work?



www.forbes.com -- According to practitioners of traditional Chinese acupuncture, inserting a tiny needle into the little toe can help heal eye problems because the toe and eyes are connected via the same "meridian." Not surprisingly, Western experts cast their own jaundiced eye upon such a claim -- until a recent high-tech imaging study supported the ancient theory.

"Those researchers found that on functional [real-time] MRI, activity in the visual cortex in the brain was actually stimulated by this acupuncture occurring in the toe," said Dr. Lixing Lao, a licensed acupuncturist who is also fully trained in Western medicine.

Lao, an associate professor at the Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, said those findings are just one of many instances where modern science is proving the efficacy of a millennia-old technique.

And that information is giving American patients new confidence in trying out acupuncture for themselves, he said. "Before, more patients were rather skeptical," Lao said. "Now, not only patients want to see me, but also doctors say, 'Hey, I want to make an appointment.' There's been a big change."

That change came in large part from a 1997 National Institutes of Health consensus statement based on an expert panel's comprehensive review of the literature. The panel concluded acupuncture to be an acceptable treatment for the relief of a wide variety of conditions, either when used in conjunction with regular medical treatment or as an acceptable alternative therapy. The conditions listed by the NIH panel included asthma, carpal tunnel syndrome, fibromyalgia, headache, lower back pain, menstrual cramps, myofascial (muscle) pain, osteoarthritis, tennis elbow and even stroke rehabilitation.

Some of the studies -- including a recent report finding acupuncture effective against lower back pain -- came from Lao's center at the University of Maryland.

There are a few key theories:

Endorphin release. "Acupuncture may trigger the brain to release these chemicals," "They're endogenous opiates -- similar to [pain-relieving] narcotics, but all natural."

Better circulation. "People have talked about a 'peripheral' effect to acupuncture stimulating the dilation of blood vessels in local areas. That would improve circulation and metabolism locally."

Anti-inflammatory effects. Pain often originates in inflamed tissues. Acupuncture appears to lower inflammation by reducing levels of a pro-inflammatory hormone, cortisol.

Changes in heart rate. "Studies are showing that acupuncture changes areas of the brain linked to the heart, modifying heart rate through the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems."

He stressed that acupuncture does not always bring about the same level of pain relief or symptom relief as modern pharmaceuticals. On the other hand, he said, "it has no side effects," meaning that it can be used safely over the long term.

According to Lao, the biggest difference between drugs and acupuncture lies in their underlying mechanism of action. "Acupuncture isn't just about symptom management -- it's also addressing fundamental problems, the underlying cause [of the problem]," he said. "It's more about stimulation, as opposed to the suppressive effects of drugs."

Frequently Asked Questions

Some of you may be new to the experience and some of you have had many past sessions and may want to learn more.

All our needles are one time use and sterilized for our patients.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture literally means “needle insertion”, the practice of guiding very fine needles into the skin and muscle to stimulate specific anatomic points in the body (called acupoints or acupuncture points) for therapeutic purposes.

Acupuncture is used to regulate or correct the flow of Qi to restore health.

Will it hurt?

It’s virtually painless! The needles are inserted without the discomfort that is typically associated with a needle. All needles are single use, pre sterilized and disposable. They are never used more than one time.

Most patients experience sensations such as tingling, numbness, dull ache, heaviness, feeling of electrical hum in the body, warmth or coolness.

Is there any medical coverage for acupuncture?

Many extended health plans have coverage for acupuncture. The plans are all different so it is advisable to check with your extended health plan provider. In 2010 MSP decided to pay \$23.00/visit for a maximum of ten visits combined between the following health care providers: Registered Acupuncturists, Chiropractors, Naturopaths and Registered Massage Therapists. To qualify for this you must be MSP premium assisted and make less than \$30,000.00/yr combined income.

How many treatments will I need?

Each person and condition is treated on an individual basis. Most patients require between six (6) and twelve (12) treatments. Some patients require more and some less.

What areas does Farnsworth Acupuncture serve?

- Kamloops
- Merritt
- Logan lake
- Ashcroft
- Cache Creek
- Barriere
- Clearwater

If you’re ready to take control of your health once and for all, call my office today at 250-374-9700 so we can discuss your healthcare needs or set up your first appointment.