

ACUPUNCTURE

INTRODUCTION: Acupuncture is the practice of inserting thin needles into specific body points to improve health and well-being. Acupuncture's effectiveness is supported by more than two thousand years of practice and research worldwide. One of the best known natural therapies, it has been endorsed by the National Institutes of Health for treating a wide range of conditions.

HOW IT WORKS: Acupuncture is based on the belief that living beings have a vital energy called qi that circulates through the body on twelve energy lines known as meridians. Each meridian is associated with a different organ system. An imbalance in the flow of qi throughout a meridian is how disease begins.

Acupuncture uses needles to stimulate specific points among the approximately two thousand different acupuncture points along the meridians. Stimulation relieves obstructions in energy flow, enabling the body to heal. In a more Western view, acupuncture likely stimulates the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) to release chemicals called neurotransmitters and hormones. These chemicals dull pain, boost the immune system, and regulate various body functions.

INDICATIONS: Acupuncture is useful for a wide range of conditions and is commonly used to treat fertility problems and to relieve localized pain, allergies, asthma, headaches, anxiety, and depression.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: None. Complications from the clinical application of acupuncture are extremely rare. There are few, if any, side-effects.

TREATMENT PROTOCOLS: Typically, the acupuncturist inserts 6-15 needles into meridians along the body based on the patient's diagnosis and symptoms. The needles are sterile, single use, and very thin, usually causing just a slight pinching sensation. Sessions typically last 20 to 30 minutes. The frequency of sessions varies with the diagnosis. Followup appointments may be scheduled as needed. Most people are relaxed and comfortable during treatment, and many fall asleep.

