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Need to Know

Does Acupuncture Really Work?

By: Brette Sember

Self Checkup

Do you double-dip at
summer parties?

- A. All the time
- B. Never!
- C. Only if I'm
with my family
or close friends

Acupuncture, the practice of sticking thin needles into the body to ease pain and cure diseases, has been a standard medical treatment in China for over 2000 years, but it's only become mainstream in the last few years.

Recent studies show that acupuncture is effective for certain illnesses and chronic conditions. Experts have found that acupuncture releases endorphins (the body's feel-good chemicals) as well as dopamine (a neurotransmitter that affects your mood), according to Dr. Stanley Wainapel, clinical director of the department of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Montefiore Medical Center in New York City.

So if you're suffering from aches and pains, you might want to consider acupuncture. But first, keep these things in mind:

1. Acupuncture doesn't cure every condition.

Acupuncture has been proven to treat pain and help manage chronic conditions, such as fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal problems, arthritis, migraines and asthma. It also has a track record for minimizing queasiness (say, from pregnancy or chemo treatments); helping people quit smoking and sleep better; and easing back, neck, shoulder and knee pain.

But it won't do anything for acute, severe medical problems, says Dr. Wainapel. (So if you think you might have appendicitis, go to the hospital, not your acupuncturist!) It's also not a good idea to get treatments if your skin is inflamed or irritated, especially in areas where the acupuncturist would insert needles.

Q&A

I floss before I brush, but my husband flosses afterward. Who's right?

[Get the answer »](#)



Poll

How much does your weight fluctuate in a year?

- A. 0-5 pounds
- B. 6-10 pounds
- C. More than 11 pounds

2. It's not a quick cure-all.

Each session with an acupuncturist lasts about 20 to 30 minutes, so if you're needle-phobic, avoid acupuncture. Depending on your condition, you may need to go a couple of times a week for several months. Usually, acupuncturists continue using other treatments, from medications and physical therapy to herbal supplements and massage.

3. Not all acupuncturists are created equal.

For best results, you want a certified professional. Check the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture's searchable list of physician (M.D.) acupuncturists at MedicalAcupuncture.com. Licensed acupuncturists (non-M.D.s) can be found through the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine at NCCAOM.org.

Have *you* ever tried acupuncture? How did it go?



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[sheryl](#) · 119 weeks ago

0

It's funny; you wouldn't expect needles to heal...but I know that acupuncture can be a very powerful treatment for so many conditions.

Reply



[chezsvn](#) 82p · 119 weeks ago

+1

I did try acupuncture, out of curiosity. I was surprised by how relaxed I felt and would be happy to try again for an ailment, although a number of sessions are required.

Reply



[Irene](#) · 119 weeks ago

0

I'm wondering whether acupuncture is covered by health insurers?

Reply



[HeatherL](#) · 119 weeks ago

0

I used that exact same source you did for an article I wrote on

acupuncture. He must be a real expert. I've never tried acupuncture but I want to.

Reply



[kerry dexter](#) · 119 weeks ago

0

thoughtful explanation, thanks.

Reply



ChristineGL · 119 weeks ago

0

I remember how amazed I was that acupuncture helped me when I had migraines. I've also used a related therapy (moxibustion) during pregnancy, when I lived in Asia and was amazed by how effective that was too.

Reply



[ruth pennebaker](#) · 119 weeks ago

0

My experiences with acupuncture have also been positive. I'm really happy to see good science supports it.

Reply



[@pen4hire](#) · 118 weeks ago

0

I did try acupuncture, and although at the time it didn't seem to be helping the headaches I was having, it left me feeling

both relaxed and energized. I loved the feeling I got. A few months later, the headaches all but disappeared. Since I'd had them for several years and nothing else changed, I have to believe it was the acupuncture that helped.

Reply

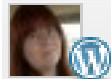


[Living Large](#) · 118 weeks ago

0

I used it when I had a horrible stomach problem. It didn't sure me, but it made it more tolerable until I could have surgery.

Reply



[jboursaw](#) 32p · 118 weeks ago

+1

I've heard great things about acupuncture, but have never tried it. I'd be willing to give it a go, though.

Reply



[jeanien barone](#) · 117 weeks ago

0

I didn't believe acupuncture worked until I had a bout of tennis elbow. I tried everything and nothing worked. After a year of pain, I tried acupuncture. And after one visit, no pain. Hard to believe. My friend who suffered a herniated disk was in dire pain. He also tried it and it provided significant relief. So much so that he walked into the office using a cane and walked out sans cane. Hard to believe.

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