

# Our Services

## Acupuncture

The Physiotherapist can provide acupuncture to assist with pain management and treatment of conditions such as persistent headaches, back and neck pain.

### What is Acupuncture?



**Acupuncture** is a therapeutic method used to encourage natural healing, reduce or relieve pain and improve function of affected areas of the body. Acupuncture is safe and effective and is often successfully used as an alternative to medications or even surgery. Relief is often obtained when traditional medical therapy has failed.

Acupuncture involves the insertion of very fine needles through the skin and tissues at specific points on the body. There is no injection of any substance and the treatment itself causes minimal discomfort.



**“Classical”** acupuncture was developed in China as a system of diagnosing and treating pain and disease. Although proven successful for hundreds of years without the benefit of modern medical knowledge, it is only in recent years that the scientific and medical communities in Europe and North America have begun to study acupuncture to understand and explain its effectiveness.

**“Anatomical”** acupuncture refers to a more modern approach taken today by the Acupuncture Foundation of Canada (AFC) and other medically trained acupuncture therapists. When combined with a knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology, modern therapists can use acupuncture with great understanding and effectiveness.

**Modern** technology has allowed variations in acupuncture treatment. Electro-acupuncture involves stimulation of inserted needles with gentle electrical impulses. Rubber electrodes or moistened cotton-tipped applicators can also be used to deliver electrical stimulation to acupuncture points (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation or T.E.N.S.). Low power laser may also be used instead of needles to stimulate appropriate points.

### **How does acupuncture work?**

Acupuncture stimulates the body to produce its own pain relieving chemicals called “endorphins”. These chemicals mimic morphine by attaching to opiate receptor sites found throughout the nervous system. Endorphins help to block pathways that relay pain messages from the body to the brain, resulting in relief of pain, general relaxation and biochemical restoration of the body’s own internal regulation systems.

The improved energy and biochemical balance produced by acupuncture stimulates the body’s natural healing abilities, reducing inflammation, and promoting physical and emotional well-being.

### **How is acupuncture used today?**

- Acupuncture is very effective in treating a variety of painful disorders, both acute and chronic.
- The World Health Organization has identified the benefits of acupuncture in the treatment of a wide range of medical problems including
  - Digestive disorders: gastritis, hyperacidity, spastic bowel, constipation, diarrhea
  - Respiratory disorders: sinusitis, bronchitis, asthma
  - Neurological and muscular disorders: headaches, neck and back pain, neuralgia, frozen, shoulder, tennis elbow, tendonitis, sciatica, arthritis
  - Urinary, menstrual and reproductive disorders
  - Addictions, insomnia

In treating any illness or affliction, a correct diagnosis is important before any decisions are made regarding therapy. Once the diagnosis is established, a qualified practitioner can advise whether acupuncture is appropriate.

**\*\* *Physiotherapists provide treatment to conditions which fall within their scope of practice. These are primarily neurological and muscular disorders.***

### **Are there any adverse effects or risks to the treatment?**

One of the most striking aspects of acupuncture is the almost complete absence of adverse effects and complications from its use. Most patients find that the treatments are relaxing and cause minimal discomfort.

People with pacemakers should avoid electrical stimulation unless approved by their cardiologist. Women in early pregnancy and haemophiliacs should be treated with caution.

The AFC recommends that only sterile disposable needles be used, preventing any risk of infection. In particular, there is no possibility of transmission of the AIDS or hepatitis viruses when sterile disposable needles are used.

### **Does it hurt?**

People experience differing sensations with acupuncture. Most patients feel only minimal discomfort as the needles are inserted: some feel no pain at all. Once the needles are in place, there should be no significant discomfort.

Acupuncture needles are extremely fine and are made from stainless steel. Two or three acupuncture needles would fit inside the barrel of a regular hollow needle used for injections.

### **How many treatments would be required?**

The number of treatments will vary with each individual and the condition being treated. For acute problems, only a few treatments may be required. In some cases, one treatment will be sufficient.

For complex or longstanding conditions, one or two treatments a week for several weeks may be recommended with less frequent treatments as improvement occurs. Treatment sessions usually last between 15 and 30 minutes. Relief may be immediate or occur within a few hours or after a few days.

In some conditions, several sessions may be required before improvement is noticed. Eighty to ninety percent of patients respond well to acupuncture with noticeable improvement. Acupuncture can be used as the only form of therapy or it may be combined successfully with other forms of medical or physiotherapy.

### **Do I have to believe in acupuncture for it to work?**

No. Acupuncture is used successfully on cats, dogs, horses and other animals. These animal patients do not understand or believe in the process that helps them get better. A positive attitude towards wellness may reinforce the effects of any one of type treatment. A neutral or negative attitude (I don't know if I really believe in this") will not block the effects of acupuncture.

### **Is there any special advice to follow before an acupuncture treatment?**

Acupuncture treatment can be done at any time. Patients are advised not to eat unusually large meals before or after treatment. It is best to avoid alcohol or sedatives for four hours prior to treatment. Pain medication may be taken as required.

### **What about after treatment?**

If possible, a short rest after treatment is desirable, but not essential. Some patients feel unusually relaxed and prefer to plan activities accordingly. Strong exercise is not recommended immediately after treatment.

For painful conditions, avoid strenuous activity for 48 hours after treatment. Alcohol, and ideally caffeine and cigarettes should be avoided for at least two hours. Medication, as directed by your physician may be taken as required.

*This educational information presented here was prepared by the Acupuncture Foundation of Canada.*

*The AFC is a non-profit organization founded in 1974 for the purpose of defining and maintaining the highest professional standards for the use of acupuncture. Post-graduate training is provided to licensed physicians, physiotherapists, dentists and veterinarians. The following is the mission statement of the AFC:*

**Acupuncture is safe and effective and complements conventional medical treatment.**

**Our mission is to ensure its integration and expansion within the health care delivery system through professional and public education, development of standards of practice, advocacy and research.**

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