

What is Acupuncture?

Like most broad medical disciplines, the practice of acupuncture and oriental medicine covers a spectrum of treatments, diagnostic capabilities, and patient interactions. Acupuncture is widely practiced in eastern medicine for the diagnosis and treatment of illnesses, as well as broader prevention and well-being therapies.

Specifically, acupuncture refers to the stimulation of specific points on the body, by insertion of very fine, sterile, stainless steel needles to elicit a predictable physiological response. This stimulus may also be administered to the points using mild electrical stimulation (with or without needles), pressure techniques with the hands ("acupressure"), or the application of heat by various methods. Applying pressure or needling to these points stimulates the nervous system to release certain chemicals in the muscles, spinal cord, and brain. These chemicals either change the body's experience of symptoms, especially pain, or trigger the release of additional hormones which influence the body's internal regulating system.

The acupuncturist's skill at determining the appropriate points to treat is based upon their ability to accurately distinguish the presenting pattern of symptoms, knowledge of correct points to address that pattern, and understanding of the proper type of stimulus for each point. The possession of this knowledge and skills is the key distinction between a professional, specialized, certified acupuncturist and other health care providers who employ acupuncture only as a modality (stimulating points for their general effect without adjusting their choice of points to the specific patient's need.)

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Effects of Acupuncture

Acupuncture treatment can be used to address a variety of symptoms in patients, as well as to promote general health and well-being as a preventative treatment. National and international authorities, including the World Health Organization, the National Institutes of Health, and the American Medical Association, have recognized the effectiveness of acupuncture as a treatment for a wide range of issues, including chronic and post-operative pain, musculo-skeletal disorders, respiratory problems, neurological disorders, mental-emotional disorders, gastrointestinal conditions, ear, eye and mouth disorders, and reproductive issues.

