



Jean Painter - Dipl. OM/CH/Ac., L.Ac.

Harmony Integrative Medicine, LLC
 518 East Gurley Street
 Prescott, AZ 86301
 (928) 776-4895

Relieve Pain Naturally with Acupuncture

Increasingly, people are looking for more natural approaches to help relieve painful conditions instead of relying on medications. Acupuncture has no side effects and can be helpful for all types of pain, regardless of what is causing the pain or where the pain is located. Some studies have shown the pain relief it provides can last for months.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain before and after acupuncture treatment for pain shows dramatic decreases in brain activity--up to 70 percent. This decrease in activity in certain areas of the brain is thought to be the reason why acupuncture treatments reduce pain.

In addition to reducing pain, acupuncture also hastens the healing process by increasing circulation and attracting white blood cells to an injured area.

The basis of acupuncture is expressed in this famous Chinese saying: "Bu tong ze tong, tong ze bu tong," which means "free flow: no pain, no free flow: pain."

In other words, any kind of pain or illness represents an obstruction in the normal flow of Qi, or life force. Simply put, acupuncture moves Qi, restoring free flow.

There are 100 million Americans experiencing chronic pain, of which 25 million have chronic pain syndrome. While pain is a perfectly normal reaction to certain events, when it persists for over 12 weeks and additional debilitating symptoms arise, the condition is pathological and treated as chronic.

Chronic pain syndrome is not just a longstanding battle with pain. Over time, the constant discomfort and progressive disability take a mental and emotional toll and may cause anxiety, depression, sleeping issues, guilt, fatigue, thoughts of suicide, or substance abuse.

Typically, pain starts after a traumatic event, injury, surgery, or during a chronic illness such as arthritis, fibromyalgia, cancer, or irritable bowel syndrome. Sometimes the cause of chronic pain is a mystery. The risk for developing chronic pain increases if you are a female over the age of 65, smoke, or already have a painful condition such as osteoarthritis.

According to acupuncture and Oriental medicine theory, pain is caused by the stagnation of Qi, blood, or both. When Qi, the most basic unit of energy found in all living beings, is dormant, pain moves around and can feel like a distending, dull or cramping sensation. Sluggish blood is more visible, such as when bruising occurs on the skin and the pain felt is fixed, sharp or stabbing.

Once the type and severity of pain are assessed, a treatment plan will be developed. Acupuncture coordinates the entire body to restore the balance between opposing forces on a physical, mental and emotional level. Even complex cases that include a combination of chronic headaches, insomnia, and mood swings are addressed in a single, eloquent treatment plan.

Are you in pain? Call today to schedule an appointment and see what acupuncture and Oriental medicine can do for you!



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That's the Point!



Some of the most effective points to use in acupuncture are local points of tenderness. These points are referred to as Ah Shi points, which in Chinese literally means "That's the point."

Ah Shi points are especially effective in the treatment of pain and are often used in conjunction with local and distal acupuncture points.

First mentioned during the Tang Dynasty (founded in 618 AD) in the classic book Thousand Ducat Prescriptions, Ah Shi points become spontaneously tender when disease or injury occurs, or in locations where Qi has become congested. They are not among the regular acupuncture points on a specific meridian or pathway.

They are the points that, upon palpation, are the most sensitive

Medicare to Start Limited Acupuncture Coverage

The Centers For Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced on July 15, 2019, that they propose to cover acupuncture for Medicare patients with chronic low back pain who are enrolled participants either in clinical trials sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or in CMS-approved studies. Acupuncture is not currently covered by Medicare.

The press release went on to say that "CMS has been actively collaborating with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as part of the Opioids Workgroup and Evidence Generation Workgroup to launch studies on acupuncture for the treatment of chronic low back pain in adults 65 years of age and older. Under today's proposed decision, CMS would continue its collaboration with NIH to further develop



evidence to inform future Medicare coverage determinations for acupuncture treatment for beneficiaries with chronic low back pain."

"Chronic low back pain impacts many Medicare patients and is a leading reason for opioid prescribing," said CMS Principal Deputy Administrator of Operations and Policy Kimberly Brandt. "Today's proposed decision would provide Medicare patients who suffer from chronic low back pain with access to a nonpharmacologic treatment option and could help reduce reliance on prescription opioids. CMS will work closely with our sister agencies to monitor outcomes for Medicare beneficiaries receiving acupuncture to inform our understanding of the efficacy of this therapeutic approach."

This is only a start, but very promising.

Read the original press release here: <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cms-proposes-cover-acupuncture-chronic-low-back-pain-medicare-beneficiaries-enrolled-approved>

Additional information in government-speak is here: <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/details/nca-tracking-sheet.aspx?NCAId=295>

Studies on Acupuncture and Pain

Acupuncture has become readily accepted as a viable option for pain management and studies support its therapeutic effects.

In a German study, published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, 1,162 adults with chronic, lower back pain were divided into groups treated with either acupuncture or the standard pharmaceutical and exercise therapy commonly used in conventional medicine. Researchers reported that acupuncture provided relief and lasting benefit to nearly twice as many lower back pain patients compared to drugs and exercise. Forty-eight percent of the acupuncture patients reported at least a one-third decrease in pain along with improvement in their ability to function, versus 27 percent of the patients treated with conventional methods reporting such benefits.



In another recent study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, researchers from the University of Maryland School of Medicine analyzed 33 studies covering more than 2,100 patients from around the world on acupuncture for lower back pain. They found acupuncture provided definite pain relief in the short-term (defined as relief sustained for three weeks after the end of the acupuncture sessions).

In May of 2018, *The Journal of Pain* published a study called "Acupuncture for Chronic Pain: Update of an Individual Patient Data Meta-Analysis." This large-scale project analyzed 39 scientific trials with 20,827 study participants. Researchers narrowed their focus to the patient's pain levels and their ability to physically function. They also put great importance on the effect of acupuncture to produce results after the conclusion of treatment. Researchers discovered that real acupuncture treatments showed significant results in the reduction of chronic pain, when compared to sham acupuncture or no treatment at all. Additionally, these outstanding results lasted for 1 year after the therapy ended and could not be attributed to the placebo effect. There was only a 15% reduction in its ability to alleviate pain, leading researchers to conclude that acupuncture is a viable, effective therapy to treat different kinds of chronic pain including bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons, nerves and the head.

Source: Vickers AJ, Vertosick EA, Lewith G, MacPherson H, Foster NE, Sherman KJ, Irnich D, Witt CM, Linde K; Acupuncture Trialists' Collaboration. (2018). Acupuncture for Chronic Pain: Update of an Individual Patient Data Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Pain*, 19(5):455-474. doi: 10.1016/j.jpain.2017.11.005. Epub 2017 Dec 2. Retrieved online at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29198932>

Research conducted at the Ribeirão Preto Dental School, São Paulo University in Brazil, found that after three months of acupuncture, patients with Temporomandibular joint and muscle disorders (TMJ) experienced significantly less pain, increased strength of their bite and decreased EMG activity of the masticatory muscles.

Source: Rancan SV, Bataglion C, Bataglion SA, Rêgo Bechara OM, Semprini M, Siéssere S, de Sousa JPM, Crippa JAdS, Hallak JEC, and Regalo SCH. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. December 2009, 15(12): 1307-1310. <http://click.health.ibemail.com/?qs=9b9372b476cd413d87b2c7bfaa4584f553e0d7b949321ada50c6122ebc3dea438be8b7ace357fc9c1490560557f315f3>

Chronic Lower Back Pain

Lower back pain is an extremely common concern, affecting anywhere from 75 to 90 percent of people at some point in their lives. Lower back pain is second only to the common cold as a cause of lost days at work, and it is one of the most common reasons to seek medical care, including acupuncture. In fact, one of the top reasons that people get acupuncture treatments is for lower back pain.

Despite the large number of pathological conditions that can give rise to lower back pain, up to 85 percent of cases are classified by physicians as 'non-specific'. When lower back pain is examined from an Oriental medicine perspective, it is seen as a disruption to the flow of Qi within the area and associated with a specific disharmony, and it is treated accordingly.



and their locations are not fixed. In many cases a small knot or pea sized nodule can be felt under the skin at these points of tenderness.

If you have pain, palpate around the area of pain to see if you can find the Ah Shi points.

Post-Operative Pain Relief

Acupuncture is excellent for managing post-surgical side effects such as surgical pain, loss of appetite, and upset stomach or nausea. In addition to strengthening the immune system and increasing energy, acupuncture is also a great way to reduce swelling, decrease stiffness and pain, reduce scarring and scar tissue and speed up recovery.

Research from Duke University Medical Center has shown that acupuncture can significantly reduce post-operative pain and their need for powerful opioids to treat pain. Duke University anesthesiologists combined data from 15 randomized clinical trials to reach their conclusion. Using acupuncture both before and after surgery produced the best results for patients, who reported lower levels of post-operative pain and a significantly reduced need for painkillers. In addition, acupuncture mitigated the negative side effects of opioids when they were used.

"The most important outcome for the patient is the reduction of the side effects associated with opioids," said T.J. Gan, M.D., the Duke anesthesiologist who presented the study at the annual scientific conference of the American Society for Anesthesiology in San Francisco in October 2007. Gan pointed out that acupuncture is a relatively inexpensive therapy that has virtually no side effects when practiced by trained professionals.

Get Relief from Frozen Shoulder

Frozen shoulder, or adhesive capsulitis, begins with stiffness and pain in the shoulder. Over time, the pain gradually increases until the whole area is no longer able to move. This is due to a thickening of the connective tissue surrounding

The disruption of Qi that results in lower back pain is usually associated with the following three disharmonies:

Weak Kidney Qi

In Oriental medicine, the lower back is referred to as the "dwelling of the Kidneys." The majority of chronic lower back pain conditions are associated with Kidney deficiency. Pain related to Kidney deficiency is typically dull and erratic. It is usually aggravated by fatigue and improves with rest.

Stagnation of Qi and Blood

When the flow of Qi along the meridians that traverse the lumbar region becomes congested, it is referred to as the stagnation of Qi and blood. This presents with a severe stabbing pain that is worse with rest and better with movement, tenderness to touch and can be accompanied by stiffness and tightness.

Invasion of Cold and Dampness

Cold, damp type pain is generally worse in the morning and when the weather is cold and damp. This type of pain improves with movement and the application of heat. Stiffness and contraction of back muscles that is aggravated by immobility indicates cold predominance. Swelling, numbness and a heavy sensation are indicative of dampness.

Reduce Pain, Improve Flexibility and Strengthen Joints

Your joints are the points in the body where two bones are attached. They are mostly composed of fibrous connective tissue and cartilage, and their purpose is to provide structure and allow for articulation.

Maintaining strength and suppleness in the joints is critical to preventing bursitis, sprains, tendonitis, dislocations, and other injuries.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine offer treatments and strategies that can help.

Tui na, roughly translated as 'pinch and pull,' is an excellent way to give a boost of power to ailing joints as well as the surrounding structures. It encompasses a wide range of therapeutic massage techniques.

Traditionally used as a tool to treat illness and injuries, words such as pulling, pinching, rolling, shaking, stretching, pressing, and kneading accurately describe the way a patient's body is manipulated during a session.

There are many reasons why tui na is utilized for treating joint issues. It can reduce inflammation, control pain, help with the symmetry of movement, and relieve pressure on joints by applying its techniques to the muscles that support those joints.

As pain and inflammation reduce, proper articulation of the joint is attained. As joints strengthen, the body begins to move properly, ensuring no undue tension is placed in the wrong spots.

Increase your intake of healthy fats commonly found in fish, nuts, avocados, and olive oil to help your joints stay pliable and lubricated. Avoid or limit refined sugars and carbohydrates like pasta, pastries, bread, white sugar, and soda which are known to cause irritation and inflammation.

Make time for proper rest and relaxation. One of the foundations of Oriental medicine is meditation, a mindfulness technique that is ideally practiced daily. It comes in many different forms and not all of them involve sitting down with your eyes closed but, they do require a time of quiet contemplation and regeneration.

Any activity done with a conscious intention qualifies as meditation. Walking with deliberate steps, staring intently at an object, and noticing the flow of your breathing are all easy to perform. These meditations can be done for as little as 1 minute, or longer if it feels right.

Immediate effects from even the most modest of meditations can cause a lowering of the heart rate and a pleasing, relaxing sensation. Or, it could be, there is a physical or mental pain that had previously been suppressed but is now surfacing. This is normal. Disharmony or pain may arise in order to be dealt with.

Meditating shortly after a tui na treatment could prove advantageous to further amplify the healing energy generated for improving joint health.

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the shoulder joint. The final stage results in extreme stiffness that greatly reduces or completely eliminates the full range of motion.

Lack of physical movement of the arms and shoulders can increase the risk for developing adhesive capsulitis. A simple remedy before any symptoms set in includes exercises that utilize the full range of motion for this area of the body. Sometimes, however, injuries or other medical conditions can prevent this from happening.

For those who can, give your body a nice, deep stretch by raising your arms as high as they will go. Swinging your arms in all directions, even just for a minute or two, will help stimulate blood flow and keep your muscles supple.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can also assist in bringing mobility back to the shoulder and reducing pain. Two excellent acupuncture points include a point on the leg called *Yanglingquan* and another one on the front of the shoulder named *Jianqian*.

The main function of *Jianqian* is to treat shoulder pain, stiffness, diminished mobility, and even paralysis. This acupuncture point encourages *Qi* and blood to move into the area. When *Qi* flows unimpeded into an injured part of the body, blood follows and brings with it the healing and lubricating agents needed to reduce the symptoms of frozen shoulder.

This healing process can be further enhanced with the needling of *Yanglingquan*. Even though it is located on the lower half of the body, it is widely regarded for its special effect on the sinew, soft tissue, and joints of the body. It is particularly useful in the case of adhesive capsulitis to help lubricate and soften the area surrounding the shoulder joint.

While a little pain and stiffness in the shoulders and arms may not be cause for alarm, especially at the end of a stressful day or a good workout, sustained discomfort and an inhibited range of motion may be something more serious.

