

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a technique where thin needles are inserted into the surface of the skin to help treat certain health problems. It is a component of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) – a system of medicine that is more than 3,000 years old.

We are beginning to understand more about the way acupuncture works from a biological standpoint, as clinical proof for its effectiveness grows. It is believed that acupuncture stimulates the **central nervous system** (the brain and spinal cord), releasing chemicals into the muscles, spinal cord, and brain. These chemical changes help stimulate the body's natural healing abilities and promote physical and emotional well-being.

Current research supports the use of acupuncture to help manage chronic pain and shows that its benefits are long-lasting.

What is acupuncture used to treat?

Research shows that acupuncture works particularly well to treat back pain, neck pain, shoulder pain, chronic headache, and osteoarthritis.

As part of our multidisciplinary approach to the treatment of pain, the University of Michigan Back and Pain Center offers acupuncture to patients. Acupuncture is one of the non-pharmacological (non-medication) components of our program. Patients are referred for acupuncture by U-M Back and Pain Center providers. Assessment and treatment are performed by staff

acupuncturists who have completed a master's degree in Acupuncture and TCM, have passed national board exams, and are licensed in the state.

Will my insurance cover acupuncture treatments?

Some insurance companies will reimburse the full cost of acupuncture treatment. Please contact your insurance company directly to determine whether you have coverage for acupuncture.

Will the needles hurt?

Acupuncture needles are thin, flexible, and solid – about the diameter of a human hair. A skilled practitioner can usually insert the needle without causing any discomfort. Patients frequently find acupuncture relaxing, and many fall asleep during treatments.

What should I wear to my appointment?

Please wear loose-fitting clothing. Most acupuncture points are on the arms and legs below the elbows and knees. The acupuncturist may ask you to change into a gown depending on where they decide to place the needles.

How long is a session?

As a new patient, your first appointment will be 1 hour long. It will include a detailed exam and your first acupuncture treatment. At this appointment, your provider will create an acupuncture treatment plan. Return acupuncture visits last 30 minutes.

How many treatments will I need?

The number of treatments needed is different for each person. Many conditions improve quickly with acupuncture, while others that have developed over a longer period of time take longer to treat.

Most conditions will respond to treatment within 4-6 visits. As your symptoms improve, the time between treatments will be spaced out to every other week, then every 3 weeks, then monthly. Certain conditions may require a “maintenance” treatment every 3-4 months.

While most conditions can be addressed with a specific/limited number of treatments, chronic conditions may require a longer course of treatment. A patient's attitude, diet, and lifestyle can influence the outcome of a course of treatment as well.

I am on a blood thinner (anti-coagulant medication). Can I receive acupuncture?

Yes. You may have a slightly increased risk for bruising during treatment, but anti-coagulant medication does not prevent you from getting acupuncture.

My symptoms are worse than before the acupuncture treatment. What should I do?

It is not uncommon for your symptoms to become worse for 24-48 hours (about 2 days) after a treatment before they begin to improve.

Is it normal to feel tired after a treatment?

Yes, some patients feel tired after a treatment. The fatigue (lack of energy) should subside within 24 hours.

I have a bruise from a needle. Is this normal?

Yes, slight bruising can happen from the needles being inserted. Bruises usually take about 1 week to fade/disappear.

I still feel some pain where the needle went in. Is this normal?

Rarely, a patient may experience pain at the site where a needle was inserted. When this occurs, the pain usually goes away within a few hours of treatment.

How do I contact the Back and Pain Center?

You can reach the Back and Pain Center at (734) 615-7246, Monday-Friday between 7:30 AM and 5:00 PM.

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