

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is the insertion of filiform needles into the skin at designated points on the body. It is described in Chinese theory as a way of balancing the flow of the body's life force, or *chi*, through pathways known as *meridians*. *Manual pressure, magnets, low-power lasers, heat, ultrasound, and electrical stimulation may also be used*

Indications

- Chronic pain
- Postoperative, chemotherapy-related, and pregnancy-related nausea and vomiting
- Acute pain, including dental pain
- Hypertension
- Depression
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Seasonal allergic rhinitis
- Menopausal hot flashes
- Headache, including tension and migraine headaches
- Acute hordeolum

Procedure

- The acupuncturist evaluates the patient's constitutional pattern using inspection, auscultation, inquiry, and palpation.
- The patient is awake and alert during the procedure; no anesthesia or analgesia is required.
- The patient is placed in the proper position based on the planned location of needle insertion, which varies depending on the condition being treated. According to Chinese medicine, there are 12 main meridians and various minor meridians throughout the body, and each is associated with a specific organ.
- The acupuncturist inserts each needle into the appropriate location on the body. The depth of insertion is typically 1/4" to 1" (0.6 to 2.5 cm) but may be more depending on the patient's size and age and the condition being treated.
- The acupuncturist may twirl or move the needle after needle placement.
- The acupuncturist may attach electroacupuncture electrodes to several needles and attach them to an electrostimulator. The current on the electrostimulator is then turned on and increased gradually to a maximum tolerance level.
- The acupuncturist leaves the needles in place for 3 to 33 minutes.
- When the treatment is complete, the acupuncturist removes the needles and disposes of them.

Complications

Rare complications associated with any needle use

- Disease transmission
- Needle breakage with fragments left in body
- Nerve damage
- Pneumothorax
- Pneumoperitoneum
- Organ puncture
- Cardiac tamponade
- Osteomyelitis

Local complications

- Bleeding or bruising at the insertion site
- Contact dermatitis
- Infection
- Pain or soreness at the insertion site
- Paresthesia

Pretreatment Care

- Conduct a detailed medical history.
- Educate the patient on the treatment process.
- Explain to the patient that the procedure is painless.
- If required by your facility, confirm that informed consent has been obtained and that the signed consent form is in the patient's medical record.
- Provide emotional support.

Posttreatment Care

- Schedule a follow-up appointment.
- Encourage the patient to resume normal daily activities.

Patient Teaching

Teaching should be family-centered. Be sure to include the family or caregiver, when appropriate.

- Tell the patient to report to the acupuncturist any medications or supplements that alter bleeding.
- Explain which symptoms to report after the procedure, such as numbness.
- Instruct the patient on necessary lifestyle changes, as indicated.
- Explain the importance of keeping follow-up appointments.