

# Acupuncture for pain management

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Acupuncture for Pain Management Everyone at one point in his or her life has felt pain. Imagine if you had constant pain with no relief in sight. With acupuncture, relief is just a thin wire away. Scientists are not ready to admit that acupuncture works in pain management. However, studies have shown that acupuncture can modify the perception of pain and how it is processed by the brain. Through neuroimaging and genomics, scientists can see the changes within the brain's pain center. They have observed molecular changes in the nervous and immune system.

Acupuncture has very few side effects, compared to side effects that one might receive from a management that uses drugs. Overall, one could say that acupuncture is the better choice for pain management. Acupuncture is one of the oldest healing practices in the world. There is recorded evidence that it can be dated back to 200 B. C. Acupuncture is one of the key components of the traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). (NCCAM1) It was widely used in China and Asian countries, until 1972 when acupuncture gained attention in the United States.

In 1972, James Reston, a reporter traveling with President Nixon in China, had to undergo an emergency appendectomy. He was impressed with his post-operative pain relief consisting of acupuncture and upon his return to the United States, he wrote an article in the New York Times about his experience. Then in 1997, acupuncture was formally recognized as a mainstream medicine healing option. (UOMaryland) Acupuncture is described as a system of healing where the patient is treated by insertion of extremely thin needles into their body at specific points.

It is a principle of Chinese medicine that works off your body's energy called qi, which can be described as one's life force, or energy. This energy flows through pathways called meridians and each meridian is attached to one organ or a group of organ to maintain proper flow of Qi. When there is a blockage of energy, illness and pain can happen. Insertion of extremely thin acupuncture needles into the precise point within the meridian can resolve balance and restore energy flow. nccam1) With classic Taoist philosophy, believes that illness is cause by imbalanced elements of yin and yang. Yin refers to material substance and yang is energy. When there is an imbalance between yin and yang, acupuncture helps restore balance. (Brit) All of our life we have been conditioned into believing that drugs and medication are the only relief for our aches, pains, and discomforts. Medication comes in two varieties, over the counter and prescription drugs. Over the counter drugs is what most people take for pain, rather than prescription drugs.

The most common type of over the counter drugs is NSAID's, some common names are Aleve, Ibuprofen, and Tylenol. To find out more about a drug and their side effects, you can look on line, read the package, or consult a physician desk reference (PDR). Take Aleve for example; it is for temporary relief of minor aches and pains and can temporary reduce a fever. Some common side effects are; constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, drowsiness, gas, headache, heartburn, nausea, stomach upset and stuffy nose. Also listed on the PDR for consumer's page online are some severe side effects for Aleve:

Severe allergic reactions (rash; hives; itching; trouble breathing; tightness in the chest; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue; wheezing); bloody or black, tarry stools; change in the amount of urine produced; chest pain;

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confusion; dark urine; depression; fainting; fast or irregular heartbeat; fever, chills, or persistent sore throat; loss of appetite; mental or mood changes; numbness of an arm or leg; one-sided weakness; pale stools; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; ringing in the ears; seizures; severe headache or dizziness; severe or persistent stomach pain or nausea; severe vomiting; shortness of breath; sudden or unexplained weight gain; swelling of the hands, legs, or feet; unusual bruising or bleeding; unusual joint or muscle pain; unusual tiredness or weakness; vision or speech changes; vomit that looks like coffee grounds; yellowing of the skin or eyes. (drugs. com)

Acupuncture works off one's own energy within the body to eliminate pain, without the major side effect that drugs can produce. How acupuncture works is not entirely clear, but technology has allowed scientists to uncover pathways in the brain that respond to acupuncture. The number of meridians varies, ranging from 14 to 20 with at least 2000 acupuncture points.

nccam1) One theory of many, suggest that acupuncture stimulates the nerve fibers that transmit to the brain and spinal cord, which activates the body's central nervous system. This in turn releases hormones that make us feel less pain and improve overall health. (uofmary) Researchers are using genomic techniques to see what happens on a cellular level and the effects in the expression of genes involved in pain. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and megnetoencephalography (MEG) that are able to reveal areas of the brain that are affected during pain and show the impact of acupuncture. (nccam2) Dr. Vitaly Napadow, a Harvard Medical School neuroscientist, and his colleagues performed a research study on patient with carpal tunnel syndrome.

This study used fMRI before and after acupuncture demonstrated that the brain responded to acupuncture with greater activation in the hypothalamus region of the brain and deactivation in amygdala, located deep in the temporal lobe of the brain. These areas of the brain are connected with long-term memory, emotions, behavior and the maintenance of persistent pain state. (nccam2) The FDA has had very few complications reported with the amount of people who receive acupuncture and the number of needles used. Some of the common side effects are minor bruising and forgotten needles. Fainting has also been reported as a side effect. With the use of single usage needle, infections are rare, but still a possibility. There are some but very rare cases of organ puncture. (AFP Article) Work Cited Unites States. Dept. of Heath and Human Services. Acupuncture: An Introduction. National

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