

# **East Meets West**

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This is the sixth in a series of articles designed to educate the reader on Traditional Chinese Medicine.

*Today's article is the second in a three-part series which will focus on what to expect from a typical treatment with a licensed acupuncturist.*

## **What does treatment consist of?**

After a diagnosis is reached, the acupuncturist may elect to start treatment the same day, or on the following visit. Treatment may consist of one or more of the following modalities: **acupuncture** (with or without electrical stimulation), **moxibustion, cupping, tai-chi, qi-gong, or Chinese herbal medicine.**

## **What is acupuncture?**

Acupuncture is the insertion of very fine needles into the body at specific locations, or points. These points have been mapped by the ancient Chinese physicians over a period of two thousand years and there are hundreds of acupuncture points used today. The needles are inserted into the body at depths ranging from a few millimeters to an inch or more, depending on body location and patient age, size and overall condition.

## **Is acupuncture safe?**

When performed by a competently trained, licensed professional, acupuncture is extremely safe. All licensed acupuncturists today use individually-packaged, pre-sterilized, disposable stainless steel needles so there is virtually no chance of infection or contagion. Acupuncturists are well-trained in the anatomy of the body at the needling sites and extreme care is given to needling depth and angle of insertion when needling over areas of vital vessels and organs. The acupuncturist is also careful not to use certain points under certain conditions, such as pregnancy, when caution in needling specific points is required.

## **Does acupuncture hurt?**

The needles used in acupuncture therapy are not much thicker than a hair or a fine thread, so their insertion is practically painless. It is much different than receiving an injection with a hypodermic needle. In some cases, the patient does not even know the needles are in place. In others, there is a feeling of numbness, tingling, fullness, heaviness or pressure.

## **How many treatments will I need?**

The number of treatments required for a given condition depends on many factors, including the duration, severity, and nature of the condition being treated, the patient's response to the therapy and the skill of the practitioner. Some acute conditions can be treated in very few treatments, while some chronic conditions require much longer courses of treatment to resolve. Some degenerative conditions may require many treatments over a long period of time. In most cases,

your practitioner will recommend a course of treatment, for example, from 6-10 visits to assess the therapeutic benefits of acupuncture. To help reduce the number of treatments, your practitioner may suggest dietary modifications, specific exercises such as stretching or muscle strengthening exercises, relaxation techniques, massage, and/or Chinese herbal medicine.

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