

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following are answers to frequently asked questions about acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine.

What conditions does acupuncture most effectively treat?

The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) and the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH) endorse acupuncture as beneficial for many conditions, including the following:

- Pain
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- PMS & other menstrual disorders
- Headaches
- Depression
- Hypertension
- Digestive complaints
- Fibromyalgia
- Anxiety
- Respiratory illness

Please refer to the Links section for the complete reports by the WHO and NIH. The medical effectiveness of acupuncture has gained considerable attention and respect in western countries over the past 25 years. Medical research shows the safety and effectiveness of acupuncture. [Scientific studies are available upon request.] This ancient healing method from the East is helping modern people in the West – treating acute and chronic pain and illness, while restoring well-being on many levels. As a preventive modality, acupuncture is hard to beat. It builds vitality, detecting and correcting imbalances in the early stages, before they become established as disease.

Can I use acupuncture at the same time as medical treatment?

Absolutely yes. They make a great combination. In China, their hospitals include both western medicine and oriental medicine, and patients get whatever will help them. Under the care of your M.D., you get great diagnostic, surgical and pharmaceutical assistance when you need it. Acupuncture can work hand in hand with medical treatment to heal and strengthen the organs, relieve side effects of medication and cancer treatment, offer a possible alternative to surgery or facilitate healing from surgery, build protective vitality and enhance overall well-being. If Chinese herbs are prescribed, great care will be taken to make sure there is no contraindication with your medications. Your acupuncturist will be happy to consult with your medical doctor to coordinate your care and keep the doctor informed of your acupuncture treatment and progress.

What can I expect at the initial visit?

During your first visit, you will have the opportunity to tell me in detail what you would like to address with acupuncture and/or Chinese herbs. A complete medical history will be taken as well as a short physical exam. The initial diagnostic session will require approximately 1-1/2 hours. Occasionally, we will have time for a short treatment during the first visit, but more commonly we begin to use needles with the second visit.

What are treatments like?

Each session lasts approximately 50 minutes. An hour time slot is set aside for you. The session begins with your talking about yourself for the first 10 to 15 minutes. You may report how you felt after the last treatment, give an update of any particular pain or discomfort that you have been feeling or talk about what is most important in your life at the moment. Treatment with needles follows the talking portion of the session. Treatment strategies are custom tailored for each person. Therefore, regardless of similarities in symptoms, no two individuals receive the same treatment. Five Element Acupuncture provides an in-depth, personal system of medicine, which recognizes a person's uniqueness in body, mind and spirit.

Do the needles hurt?

I always say it can't be so bad or people would not come back. Only sterile disposable needles are used. They are not at all like medical needles, which are hollow tubes. Acupuncture needles are solid, and they are very fine, similar to a human hair. Generally, needles are inserted superficially—about 1/4th of an inch. When the needles are inserted you may feel nothing or you may feel some sensation. Each time is a unique experience. You may feel an ache, a swirling sensation, a warmth, or a sensation of energy opening along a pathway. In most treatments, the needle is removed immediately after insertion but, even in the treatments where needles are left in for a while, any discomfort lasts only a split-second and then is gone. Many patients come to savor the sensations evoked by the needles because they are touching places that need to be touched and released.

How often do I need to be treated?

Initially, people usually come for treatment once a week for six to ten weeks. In acute conditions treatment may be required more than once a week. After the initial phase of treatment, a person moves to being treated every two weeks. Once a person's energy stabilizes, they come every three to four weeks. Some people find that acupuncture assists them in maintaining a stable state of health and well-being, so they continue to come regularly. Traditionally, a person in good health comes for treatment when the seasons change, as a tune-up.

What do I do on the day of treatment?

It is a good idea to avoid alcohol, excessive coffee, strenuous exercise, heavy meals or anything extreme on the day of treatment. You should continue to take medication that has been prescribed by your physician. If possible, arrange your day so that the time following the treatment is more gentle, not unduly pressured. This will help to maximize the benefit of the treatment. However, if this is not possible do not be overly concerned. The acupuncture is quite powerful and will work for you even in the midst of your daily activities.

What is moxa?

For some patients, treatments may include the use of an herb known as moxa (*artemisia latiflora*). Moxa looks like soft, spongy fluff. It is formed into tiny cones. An ointment is placed on the skin over an acupuncture point, followed by moxa cone. The tip of the cone is lit using an incense stick and the cone is removed as soon as the patient feels the warmth. It does not burn the skin! Usually a few cones are used. Then the point is needled in the usual way. This process nourishes and warms the channel and prepares the point to be receptive to the treatment. Most patients find the use of moxa quite pleasant and aromatic.

What about herbal medicine?

Chinese herbs can be very helpful and tend to complement acupuncture treatments. Chinese herbal medicine, like acupuncture, is a sophisticated, ancient form of treatment. In Chinese herbalism, individual herbs are rarely used alone but rather are combined into carefully balanced formulas. These classic formulas have been in use for many hundreds of years. They offer a time-tested form of medicine which not only relieves symptoms but also nourishes and heals. Your own herbal prescription generally will be based on one of these classic formulas, perhaps with modifications customized for your needs.

How are the herbs taken?

Herbs are dispensed in many forms. The ideal form for an herbal formula is as a decoction of dried herbs - roots, berries, twigs, flowers and sometimes minerals. The client cooks the herbs in water to make a tea or decoction. This tea is taken usually two times a day and the excess is refrigerated for up to two weeks. A typical formula lasts seven to ten days.

For those who wish to use herbs in a more convenient way, there are tinctures, powders, capsules or pills. A tincture is a liquid made of raw herbs cooked into a very concentrated form, with alcohol added to preserve the solution – supplied in a dropper bottle. Powders are the concentrated decoction with the water removed. A measure of powder is added to hot water to make the tea. Chinese herbs can be quite strong in flavor and aroma. Tablets and capsules may be the best choice for those who find the flavor or aroma of the medicinal tea not to their liking. Whatever form, the important thing is to take the herbs.

Each herbal prescription is customized for each client, then ordered from an herbal pharmacy. Generally, I place an herbal prescription on file with a highly reputable Chinese herb company. Then the client may go to the company's web site and order the herbal medicine I have authorized for them.

Free consultation:

I am pleased to offer a free 20-minute consultation so we can meet before deciding to begin treatment. Contact me at (919) 337-7645 or email sarakane5@gmail.com.