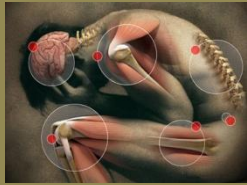


# Acupuncture and Pain

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Most people experience significant pain at some point in their lives—whether from injury, illness, or an unknown cause. Pain is a warning signal, an alarm that goes off when your body is trying to tell you that something is wrong and out of balance.

Often, people suffering from pain try to cover it up, either by ignoring the pain or taking medication. Treated in this way, the source of the pain will never completely go away—it's like hitting the snooze button on an alarm; unless the pain is treated, your body will keep sounding the alarm and reminding you that something is wrong. Eventually, the pain may get worse or become chronic.

**What can you do?** No one should have to live with pain. But what treatment is right for you? One choice is to take medication that dulls the pain for a short time. This is understandable when pain is constant and unbearable. It may be helpful, but it won't get to the root of the problem and correct it. Also, many medications will cause unwanted side effects and further compromise your health.

Surgery may be another option. At times, this approach may make sense, but it could be both expensive and risky, and there is no guarantee that it will be effective.

Acupuncture is a time-tested, safe, effective, natural, and drug-free way to eliminate pain. Unlike other methods for managing pain, there are no harmful side effects. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledge the benefits of acupuncture in treating and eliminating pain due to a wide range of causes.

**An acupuncturist's approach to pain.** Acupuncturists recognize that there is a vital life energy called Qi (chee) circulating within the body. Qi flows through a series of pathways called meridians. Meridians are like rivers within your body. Wherever a river flows, it brings with it water that provides nourishment and life to the land, plants, and people around it. Likewise, meridians transport life-giving Qi that provides nourishment to every cell, tissue, muscle, organ and gland in the body.

It is important for Qi to flow freely throughout the body. Think of water flowing through a garden hose. A blocked hose will not provide an adequate supply of water to a plant. Eventually, the plant will be unable to thrive, grow, and blossom. Similarly, a blockage in the flow of Qi anywhere in the body will inhibit the amount of nourishment that reaches our cells, tissues, muscles, organs, and glands.

Under normal circumstances, your body can easily return to good health and vitality. But if the disruption of Qi is prolonged or excessive, or if your body is weak, the flow of Qi becomes restricted and a variety of problems—including pain—may arise.

**What does an acupuncturist do?** By inserting fine, sterile needles at specific points, an acupuncturist is able to break up the blockages that have hampered the smooth flow of Qi. Once this is done, Qi can travel freely throughout the body, promoting pain-free health, well-being, and vitality.

Not only can acupuncture treat pain, it can also get to the root of the problem. When the initial cause of the pain is corrected, your body can begin to heal on deeper levels.