

## How Does Acupuncture Work?

1. For Acute Pain?
2. For Chronic Pain, Stress, Anxiety & Depression?

Here's a personal story, just don't tell anyone I told you ☺. Last winter I threw my back out. I know, how funny for a chiropractor to have this particular injury?!! Anyway, to make a long story short, after waking up on the floor, after having passed out from my low back pain, I asked my wife to kindly pass me my acupuncture needles. I always have a supply at home for emergencies. I could not move without having severe, "take me out to the barn and shoot me!", type pain.



So, I inserted one needle just under my nose, one in each hand and my wife, with some pleading on my part, placed two more in my feet. I literally felt waves of relief washing over me. I wanted to smile but I had a needle inserted just above my upper lip. Afterwards, I was able to make it to my bed with the help of my wife and Dr. Gary Lee. (By the way, thanks for the 3:30am house call Gary!) With repeated acupuncture, chiropractic and massage therapy (Again, thanks to Jim MacIntyre for the massage!) I only missed one day of work. This illustrates the power of acupuncture with severe, debilitating acute pain!

### 1. How Does Acupuncture Work For Acute Pain?

When you sustain a new injury, for instance, twisting your ankle, throwing your back out or pulling a muscle, the first thing that you notice is ***pain***. Pain is a good thing...in small doses. The problem starts when your body over-reacts or over-exaggerates the situation.

Now, it's in your body's best interest to be pessimistic and assume the worst possible scenario because if that indeed occurs, then you are prepared. But if the worst is assumed for a mild or minor injury, then this over-reaction can be severely debilitating. This kind of "over-reaction" produces an automatic defense response where your nervous system goes absolutely crazy! An exaggerated and inappropriate response then results in too much pain and too much muscle spasm that attempts to protect the site of injury.

I've had patients crawl into my office in pure agony from low back pain. They are in so much pain that they can't even lie down on one of my tables and even if they could they wouldn't be able to get up again.

What do you do to help? Acupuncture of course, and here's why. Acupuncture reduces this over-exaggeration reaction, often immediately. I don't even go near the site of pain. In fact I will move away from the injury and use arm and leg acupuncture points to reduce the pain.

Certain acupuncture points help to reduce this over-reaction in a very similar manner to re-booting your computer once it freezes. Just as turning off your computer resets the CPU, so the acupuncture resets the nervous system. The overall effect is to calm the anxiety and stress of the injury so that the body can relax and start to handle the situation.

Acupuncture also stimulates the release of endorphins in the brain and spinal cord. Endorphins are actually chemicals produced within our own bodies and are almost identical to morphine. Endorphins produce the following effects:

- a. Pain control
- b. Regulates hormones
- c. Regulates respiratory system
- d. Regulates cardiovascular system
- e. Regulates digestive system
- f. Overall homeostasis (maintains a balance of all these systems)

Endorphins will calm you down and move you from a state of over-reaction to a state of balance and well-being. By combining the effects of acupuncture, even severe mind-numbing pain can be controlled. This is how acupuncture works for acute pain.

## **2. How Does Acupuncture Work For Chronic Pain, Stress, Anxiety & Depression?**

I see a multitude of patients suffering from either chronic pain, stress, anxiety and depression or a combination of the above. Unfortunately, it seems to be happening more and more. Does acupuncture have a role in treating these conditions? It certainly does!

When a person is suffering from chronic pain, on and off or constantly, pain neurotransmitters in the brain will become depleted. They become depleted because just as a well becomes dry during a drought so do neurotransmitters eventually become exhausted with constant use. Acupuncture helps by replenishing these neurotransmitters so that the nervous system, including the brain, can try and reestablish an overall balance and a greater sense of well-being. For long-term conditions, this is a crucial first step.

Don't forget that acupuncture also stimulates the release of endorphins. Endorphins have an effect of regulating or balancing your body's systems. If you are in pain, stressed or anxious, it will sooth you. If you are exhausted or depressed, it will help to bring you up. And, the beauty of acupuncture is that its effects are cumulative. The results get better over time.

The combined effect of endorphin release and pain neurotransmitter replenishing works wonders for both acute and chronic conditions.

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