

New Patient Guide

After your acupuncture treatment

During the hours/days following a treatment, some describe a feeling of “energy moving around,” including passing sensations and possible shifts in energy level. Some patients occasionally form a small hematoma (bruise) at certain sites of needle insertion, or a tiny blister from moxibustion—both harmless. Please keep track of how you're feeling to provide feedback, which helps us develop more effective strategies as we continue to work together.

Follow-ups

Acupuncture and moxibustion work by stimulating our natural self-healing ability. In essence, skillful treatment of acupuncture points “communicates” with the body, sending signals to help rebalance the nervous, immune, hormone, circulatory, organ and structural systems. Though treatment can sometimes lead to instant and dramatic results, usually the body needs some “practice” at first, much like learning a new language or building up strength through exercise.

When first starting acupuncture for a chronic issue, a series of consecutive treatments is typically the most effective way to initiate healing and establish lasting changes. **For best results the first series of follow-ups should be relatively close together, about a week apart in most cases. 3 to 5 weekly treatments is usually a good initial course of treatment**, after which frequency of sessions can be reduced, unless the condition is unusually severe or difficult. If no symptom improvements take place within an initial course of treatment acupuncture may not be an effective treatment method for your issue, or better nutritional and self-care may be necessary to enable healing (see below).

After initial benefits are achieved, weekly or monthly care may still be beneficial for those with high-performance lifestyles or chronic pain/illness; once a season makes for great preventative health.

Self-care

Getting sufficient sleep in a fully darkened room, avoiding artificial chemicals and medications unless absolutely necessary, and getting frequent exercise will all help the body's natural healing ability and improve your response to acupuncture. Practice stress management through deep breathing and making time for peaceful recreation. Cultivate good posture and movement habits, especially if you have back, neck or joint problems. (See Books.)

Nutrition

A diet that supports vibrant health is based on the whole, organic, natural foods that our ancestors ate: grass-fed meat and eggs, wild fish/seafood, organic vegetables, root vegetables, natural fats like butter, extra virgin coconut and olive oil, nuts, seeds and avocado, fresh raw oils from flax, hemp and fish, natural vinegars, herbs and spices, and fresh fruit. Commercially processed salt should be avoided, however, unrefined sea salt contains minerals needed for normal physiology. Your sense of taste dictates the best amount of salt to eat. Sea vegetables are also an invaluable source of minerals. Maple syrup, raw honey, organic tea, organic coffee, and dark chocolate are fine in moderation. See Bridgeacupuncture.com/resources for information on local food resources.

Grains and legumes are relatively recent additions to the human diet and traditionally were eaten after soaking for several hours, fermenting or sprouting to increase digestibility. (See Books.) In moderation, rice, quinoa, millet, buckwheat and small amounts of beans/lentils are fine when properly prepared. Modern American wheat is very inflammatory and immuno-reactive, causing weight, digestive and immune problems for many people. Alcohol in moderation is fine in some cases and poison in others. Those with sinus, immune or digestive problems may want to follow Chinese advice and avoid dairy, which is an extremely “damp” food. If consuming dairy, raw, grass-fed, full-fat and

fermented forms (yogurt, kefir) are best; conventional milk is a highly processed food full of toxins and is best avoided.

Processed foods, sugar, refined oils, refined flours and artificial ingredients gradually malnourish, weaken and inflame the body's tissues, confuse the immune system and hormones, and contribute to disease and degeneration. Sweets, crackers, pastries, wheat flours, refined oils like canola, soy and corn oil and foods made or cooked with these oils, sodas, artificial sweeteners, and chemicals used to flavor and preserve are major drivers of chronic disease in our society. Although it can be challenging to give up these highly addictive modern concoctions, those who do so stand a better chance of recovering their birthright of good health.

“Superfoods” and supplements

Eating as wide a variety as possible of animals, vegetables, and fruits helps to “hit all the bases” nutritionally. In terms of animal foods, eating non-muscle parts is no longer in fashion but is seen in the wisdom of traditional cuisine world-wide. For instance, frequent intake of broth made from simmered bones and joints (“bone broth”) is the best mineral supplement known and contains matrix compounds important for gut, joint and skin health. Though unappetizing for some, organ meats like liver are one of the most nutritious things we can eat. Most can also benefit from the extra vitamin D, vitamin A and long-chain omega-3s found in a daily teaspoon of cod liver oil, and vitamin K2 from grass-fed butter or fermented soy. Most of us have disrupted gut bacteria from medication use and modern diet, and should consider a good probiotic supplement and daily lacto-fermented foods to help restore beneficial bacteria. Otherwise, use vitamins/supplements judiciously to help restore normal physiology and not as a substitute for good nutrition.

Digestion

Even the best diet will not restore health if digestion is compromised. Digestion requires a restful state of mind, therefore be sure to sit peacefully and chew well during meals. Eat to satisfy appetite but never until stuffed. Avoid too many iced beverages and emphasize cooked foods for digestibility. A teaspoon of organic apple cider vinegar in water can help to boost digestion. Acid reflux can usually be resolved with probiotics, lacto-fermented foods and by removing refined foods and wheat; long-term use of acid reflux drugs is extremely damaging to the whole body. If you need assistance with digestive issues please don't hesitate to ask.

Recommended books

Nourishing Traditions by Sally Fallon

Real Food by Nina Plank

The Perfect Health Diet by Paul and Shou-Ching Jaminet

Wheat Belly by William Davis

8-Steps to a Pain Free Back by Esther Gokhale

The Healing Power of Acupuncture and Acupressure by Matthew Bauer

Individual recommendations: