

# Acupuncture... what is it good for?

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I've been practicing acupuncture and naturopathic medicine for 10 years in Tualatin, but I still manage to be surprised sometimes by the broad reach and rapid effectiveness of these treatment methods. Patients are often surprised when I suggest acupuncture for their condition and delighted when they have good results. It disheartens me that people are suffering and don't know that acupuncture could be helpful for their condition, so I wanted to share some of the very common conditions we treat with acupuncture at our clinic and some problems you might not know could be treated with acupuncture.

The reason that acupuncture has such broad application is that it is a vital part of a complete medical system. Historically, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), was the medicine of China. This system included acupuncture, herbal medicine, dietary therapy and other modalities and was used to treat the entire body.

While advancing medical knowledge and technology provided us with more treatment options, this system, which developed over thousands of years, remained effective. In that regard, it's no exaggeration to say that we can treat anything with acupuncture. In addition to its most well known application in painful conditions, we can use acupuncture to treat skin, lung, cardiovascular, digestive, reproductive, mood, urinary, and sleep conditions.

Even in the category of pain, though, there are some types of pain you might not think to treat with acupuncture. Painful nerve conditions, including sciatica, peripheral neuropathies and even shingles, often respond well to treatment with acupuncture. We can also treat painful internal conditions such as endometriosis, IBS, and headaches including migraines. One of the treatments which surprised me the most was a patient who came in with severe joint damage for which he was recommended to have a joint replacement. Because the damage was so severe, I advised the patient that I wasn't hopeful that acupuncture

would prove that effective for him, but he had several pain free days following his first acupuncture treatment.

I mentioned irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) above, because pain is often a component of this condition. Many people don't think of acupuncture for digestive symptoms, but I find acupuncture can be very helpful with diarrhea, constipation, heartburn and nausea in addition to IBS. Other internal conditions that can be helped by acupuncture include asthma, allergies and hypertension. It is important to monitor conditions for which you are medicated while pursuing acupuncture treatment. For example, medication for high blood pressure may need to be adjusted because of the further reduction caused by acupuncture treatment.

One of my favorite conditions to treat with acupuncture is anxiety. Acupuncture usually provides some immediate relaxation and calming of anxiety, but the effects also build and last between treatments. While I usually recommend several treatments to new patients so that we can get a good idea how the treatment is working, my most memorable cases are those with significant relief achieved after the first treatment. I treated a young person with severe anxiety which was restricting their life. After a single visit, they reported never feeling the same level of anxiety and were able to discontinue treatment after only a few sessions.

It's also very satisfying to work with patients on fertility issues. Both male and female partners can be treated with acupuncture to enhance fertility and acupuncture can be used alongside more advanced fertility treatments.



Acupuncture can also be used to treat infectious conditions such as upper respiratory infections (coughs, colds, sore throats) and urinary tract infections (bladder infections, also called cystitis). This category is a good example of when acupuncture may not be the only recommended treatment. In certain conditions, to prevent complications or speed recovery, herbal or prescription antimicrobial treatments may be recommended instead of or in addition to acupuncture treatment.

In fact, acupuncture alone is necessarily the right treatment for any given condition. Classical Chinese Medicine included herbal medicine, dietary therapy, topical applications, exercises like tai chi and qigong and other manual therapies. Some conditions may respond better or more quickly to other therapies. As both a naturopathic physician and acupuncturist, I utilize all of these tools to help patients re-establish their health. If you haven't considered acupuncture previously, schedule a consultation to learn more or come in for your first treatment.



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