

WHAT IS ACUPUNCTURE?

I began practicing Oriental Medicine, including Chinese Herbal Medicine and acupuncture in 1960. I have continued to learn every day since I began practicing.

Since I received my certification in 1974 from the Oregon State Board of Medical Examiners, many of my patients and friends have asked me to write about acupuncture, herbs, and moxibustion. This pamphlet is my answer. It will introduce you to the Chinese healing arts and hopefully answer many of your questions about Chinese herbs and acupuncture treatments.

In China today, the traditional healing arts consist of two cooperative parts: the healing methods of acupuncture and herbalism. Currently, in the Western world, acupuncture is the better known of these two methods. As the Chinese healing arts spread throughout the world, the combination of acupuncture and herbs will likely become as widespread as Western medical science is today. In China, various acupuncturists, herbalists, and medical doctors work side by side. We hope someday to see a similar system in the West. Acupuncture has a long and noble history but it is also a continually evolving active science.

This pamphlet expresses just a tiny fraction of the accumulated knowledge about acupuncture, moxibustion, and herbs. What it contains is correct and true to the best of my knowledge and current level of experience. I expect, however, to always be learning and I welcome new ideas and suggestions so I may continue to help my patients.

Sincerely,

Wai Tak Cheung
Licensed Acupuncturist

HOW OLD IS ACUPUNCTURE?

Chinese culture is more than 5,000 years old, encompassing a wide range of ancient and modern arts and sciences. Acupuncture is an inheritance from the ancients’ wisdom, dating back over 4,000 years—twice the age of Western medicine. Herbalism does not date back as far, but today, with the cooperation of the Chinese people, both acupuncture and Chinese herbs have been bestowed as a gift upon the West.

The word "acupuncture" derives from the very earliest practices of using a "sharp stone" treatment, wherein a bamboo shoot or sharpened stick was used to accurately puncture the skin for lasting healing effects. Later, the technique was refined as a more intricate knowledge of “working-metal”. This made it possible to make needles of iron, then silver, then gold.

The earliest book written about Traditional Oriental Medicine, *Huang I, Nei Jing* or *The Yellow Emperor's International Classic* (250 BC), includes detailed theories of anatomy, physiology, etiology, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. It is still a basic text for every acupuncturist and herbalist. This book explains the 14 meridians of the body and speaks of the 365 points dealing with the 365 days of the Chinese calendar year; 132 are named points, and the remaining 233 are shown, but not named. Later, the system was refined to include 12 regular meridians and 8 extra meridians, with 657 points recognized today.

In recent years, China practiced a "closed door" policy during reconstruction, but historically has been open to outside influences and cultures. In 1460, the famous Silk Road between Arabia and Asia introduced Western art, religion, and commerce into Chinese culture; much that came in with the Silk Road has now become a part of China. More recently, China has accepted the religious influences that came in from the West in the last 200 years: Orthodox and Protestant Christian, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, and Catholic Chinese join Islamic and Buddhist Chinese, whose beliefs came in years ago, alongside the more commonly known Taoists and Confucians. With Western religious ideas came other Western ideas and practices, such as new ways of cooking and dressing, but most importantly, Chinese healers learned new techniques from the Western medical practitioners.

For thousands of years, China has been a nation of millions who have used acupuncture. Over 200 years ago, Western medicine's use of surgery and drugs was introduced to China and combined with acupuncture and Chinese medicine. The Chinese now have a more complete health care system than does the West. When patients' conditions have been diagnosed, they understand which form of medicine to employ. In mainland China and Taiwan, traditional Western medical hospitals—through the use of equipment and combined efforts of acupuncturists, MD's, and Doctors of Chinese Medicine, —can help more emergency patients and treat more acute diseases and conditions than realized by the acupuncturists of years ago.

In What Way Is Acupuncture New?

Since about the 16th century, acupuncture continuously developed and spread from China to Japan, to Korea, and to Vietnam. At about the end of the 17th or early 18th century, it began in Europe.

Acupuncture has only recently come to the United States. Since former President Richard Nixon’s visit to China in 1972, acupuncture has continuously gained popularity because it has been shown to be of value in numerous cases and includes many medical doctors among its practitioners.

With the spread of acupuncture throughout the world, clinical input from other countries has contributed techniques to the practice of acupuncture. New techniques (such as treating patients with herbs and vitamins, injecting Western medicine into meridian points after acupuncture treatments for specific conditions, adding new treatment areas of the body, and using mild electrical stimulation of the points) have led to greater knowledge of what acupuncture can do when the combined efforts of Eastern acupuncturists and Western Medical doctors are used. For example, new points for acupuncture treatment can be added on the scalp, eyelid, nose, outside part of the ears, feet, ankles, and hands. Using these points indicates the sensitive areas of the body and if they respond well and successfully to treatment.

The technology of Western science is now sometimes used in traditional acupuncture treatment. It is not surprising to see electrical stimulation to the various meridian points; this has become a popular method of treatment for bone spurs.

We also use magnetism, laser therapy, red-light therapy and are always finding new methods to help people heal.

One step toward acceptance of Chinese acupuncture has been through research, comparing the effects of healing processes. A medical doctor in Taiwan discovered that there are at least 108 points used in Western medical pain-relief techniques. These points are actually acupuncture points used by acupuncturists for pain relief and many other conditions.

How Does Acupuncture Work?

Over the years, many theories have been developed to explain how acupuncture works. Research discussed in the next section explains some of the physiological responses to acupuncture. Whether these are primary or secondary to the effect of acupuncture remains to be seen. Our science is founded on the belief that healthy human beings can heal themselves, but sometimes the body is overwhelmed and the body or brain becomes "lazy" and needs a "wake-up call." Acupuncture treatment provides this stimulation.

Traditional yet clinically useful theories state that the body has a bio-energy of electromagnetic current running through it. This current, divided into two basic types: "yang," or positive, and "yin," or negative, flows through a system of pathways called meridians, which connect the internal organs to hundreds of points on the outside layers of the body, often far from the organ itself. Acupuncturists do

not have to treat the area directly involved. By stimulating certain meridian points, a positive effect is carried to the affected area.

If a meridian or organ has too much or too little positive or negative energy, disease will set in. The insertion of needles, at certain acupuncture points on the meridians that come closest to the surface of the body, produce a regulating effect on that meridian's energy. This allows the organ and meridian to return to a healthy state, thereby repelling disease. For example, the lung is an internal organ, but we do not penetrate the body wall to needle the lung itself. Instead, we needle some of the acupuncture points along the meridian that affects the lung. There are 22 possible points, 11 in each arm, which influence the lungs. Asthma, for example, is often treated by using a point called L7 (lung 7) located in the wrist, although many other points could be used instead. Our ancient ancestors made these important findings using the lower part of the extremities, from the knees to the toes and from the elbows to the fingers.

Acupuncture and Science

As mentioned before, acupuncture had been used for thousands of years. Often Western medicine claims that acupuncture has not been "scientifically" proven, but to my way of thinking, the long history of successful results proves its effectiveness. Chinese healers have also established standards to judge their own healing methods and this, too, provides age-old and continuing proof of acupuncture's effectiveness. These tools and standards of evaluation may be foreign and incomprehensible to the Western trained doctor or researcher whose point of view is very different. They literally see the world differently. For example, the ancients did not have complicated

machinery or a lot of funding for research, so for thousands of years, the practice has been "hands on." Acupuncturists have used their methods on themselves and other humans; we do not use animals for scientific testing and research, although acupuncture is effectively used to treat animals. Chinese Traditional Herbal Medicine similarly developed through self-testing by the experimenter. The cleansing properties of tea, for example, were discovered about 800 B.C. by Dr. Sun Noon who tested about fourteen herbs a day in the mountains. He often felt ill, but noticed that eating tea leaves made him feel better, leading him to infer that tea cleansed his body of toxins. It would be difficult indeed to get this sort of information and this kind of inference from an animal.

The relative newness of acupuncture to the Western world has occasioned skepticism. For example, Western medical practitioners sometimes view the positive results of acupuncture treatments as simply a "placebo affect," but for the philosophical and practical reasons mentioned above, we of course disagree. The healing effects of acupuncture have been empirically observed repeatedly over thousands of years. In the West, these thousands of years of observation and the careful honing of diagnostic and clinical knowledge resulting from this observation cannot be repeated quickly, nor dismissed as "unscientific."

For instance, scientific research in China has categorized each of our herbs in ways that Chinese herbalists use to create successful treatment by combining various herbs. When Western medicine looks at herb combinations, however, it cannot find a clear cut chemical "reason" for the herb compound's doing what it appears to do in healing a specific condition. The manner in which Chinese herbs work together is different from what Western researchers understand, so

they are skeptical. When I make this point, I am not against the Western healing arts or their methods, I am just saying that they have not been trained in our methods, so it is understandable that they do not see what we see.

In recent years, acupuncture has begun to use methods more understandable to the Westerner. Treatments have been created to work with direct stimulation of the muscles, nerves, and tendons, as well as the meridians. For example, if a muscle is paralyzed or weak, the muscle itself or the nerve to that muscle may be directly stimulated by the insertion of tiny acupuncture needles that may be electrically stimulated.

In China, research has shown that acupuncture and moxibustion stimulate lymph production, white and red blood cell counts, production of endorphins (natural pain killers secreted in the brain), and help regulate blood pressure. Thus, it can be said that acupuncture helps strengthen and normalize the function of the entire body, thereby allowing a diseased part to return to health.

In both the East and West, there is new research being conducted that indicates the brain itself produces specific chemicals (endorphins are one) which are used by the body in innumerable functions. As this research pinpoints more accurately the way the brain controls all body functions, perhaps the more precise answer as to why and how acupuncture works will be found.

What Is Moxibustion and How Does it Relate to Acupuncture Treatment?

Moxibustion is the therapeutic application of heat to the same points used in acupuncture. In moxibustion therapy, a material called moxa—the dried leaves of the *Artemisia Vulgaris* or mugwort plant—are ground and used either alone or in conjunction with acupuncture needles. The ancients found its very penetrating heat effective in stimulating the meridian points.

The acupuncturist has several methods of using moxa alone. One is to roll it into a small mound, place it on top of a piece of ginger, garlic, salt, or red or green pepper, then light the moxa so the skin feels warm. The acupuncturist can also place a small mound of moxa directly on the skin, light it, and remove the moxa when the patient feels the heat, leaving no burn or scar. (In ancient times, moxa was always left on the skin.) Moxa can also be rolled into a cylindrical shape and held over the skin until soothing and penetrating warmth is felt.

Acupuncturists can use moxa with the needles or use moxa and needles separately. Sometimes needle points are heated with moxa, then inserted; or the needles can be used, then removed and moxa heat applied on the same area. Various treatments may be used at different times. For example, in the treatment of chronic diarrhea, when the patient comes in weak, an acupuncturist may choose to use moxa first. Then, when the patient's condition improves, he or she may use a combination of moxa and needles together.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT ACUPUNCTURE
Does Acupuncture Fit in with Other Healing Methods?

Yes, all legal healing methods are useful. As a patient you must decide which healing art or combination of arts is best for you. The healing arts are like a tree. Chiropractic, osteopathy, internal medicine, surgery, nutrition, massage, naturopathy, Chinese Herbal Medicine and acupuncture are the branches of that tree. The trunk is goodwill and open-mindedness. The lack of cooperation between these sciences is like a storm that has almost torn the branches from the trunk. In the future, the tree will be whole and strong, each part helping the other to produce the shade and fruit necessary to protect and nourish mankind. We must begin now to work toward the wholeness of our tree.

With combined efforts and cooperation between the fields, complicated conditions can be more readily treated. In the United States today, various healing arts use different theories in their practices, and often do not understand each other or communicate well. It is no wonder, then, that the patient is confused about which choice is best. In this office, acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine may be used together or separately as each case requires. This results in a flexible, multi-referenced approach to both diagnosis and treatment.

We acupuncturists work with chronic conditions a great deal, particularly when the patient has not achieved relief from other kinds of treatment. For example, after hospital treatment, the victim of an automobile accident may appear fine, but soon develop chronic migraine headaches. The acupuncturist can help a great deal in a case

like this, even working independently, but the patient would receive greater benefit by using the skills of a physical therapist or massage therapist as well. Too often a patient will limit treatment to use of a physical therapist or chiropractor. Sometimes a lack of understanding prevents him or her from seeing an acupuncturist or herbalist, who could actually speed the recovery.

In China, acupuncturists work alongside hospital staff; we understand which conditions we can help and which we cannot. At the very least, acupuncturists could help patients in any hospital by using their knowledge to help in bone-setting, by treating severe bleeding in emergency or operating rooms, in alleviating post-operative conditions, and for pain reduction and anesthesia. So far in the United States, acupuncturists are not allowed to practice in emergency rooms and only rarely have the opportunity to work with patients in hospital settings.

This is a great loss to patients; I hope it will soon be changed. I have many friends who are medical doctors that use acupuncture needles with their Western techniques; the combination works very well.

How Does the Acupuncturist Decide Which Meridian or Points to Use?

Because patients are different; the points chosen for each patient vary. In addition, as a patient's condition improves, the meridian or points used will vary with the improvement. When

deciding what meridian or points to use, the acupuncturist must first assess the patient's condition through diagnosis.

There are eight ancient classifications for all diseases that are still valid for assessing a patient's condition today. Disease must be either yin or yang, cold or hot, internal or external, hypo-functional or hyper-functional. The acupuncturist uses four traditional Chinese methods to help decide which condition exists and what must be done to bring the body into balance.

1. Observing: The acupuncturist looks at the patient. How is the patient's coloring? How does the patient walk? What are the patient's facial expressions? For example, does the patient look tired or does the patient seem alert and energetic? Some acupuncturists examine the patient's eyes, tongue, and fingernails as well. Because these observations guide the acupuncturist, it is important that the patient come for appointments in a natural state—no makeup, no chewing gum or food that might discolor the tongue, no alcohol which discolors facial skin. Smoking also influences the skin.

2. Listening: The acupuncturist listens to the patient. Is the voice too loud or too soft? Is the breath regular, is it rough or difficult?

3. Questioning: The acupuncturist asks questions about how the patient feels, what ails them. It is important for the patient to be honest and tell the acupuncturist everything of concern; the answers to these questions help the acupuncturist determine the best treatment. Acupuncturists tend to treat the whole body, not just the specific areas

where the symptoms are expressed. Accordingly, they are interested in all areas of the patient’s experience because physiologically everything relates.

4. Palpitating: The acupuncturist checks by touch in two ways, first for painful points on the body and then by feeling different parts of the radial artery. Unusual qualities in the pulse may indicate an abnormal internal condition. Classically, this is called "taking the pulses."

Sometimes the patient may be confused by the asking of questions or the answers given, but all the information from these methods are combined to determine which acupuncture points are used.

Sometimes it is not necessary or desirable to directly stimulate an organ to get good results, as in the case of severe stomach spasms when the affected area is too sensitive to even touch. In this case, the acupuncturist will not put needles in the stomach area, but in the area on the outside of the shin bone below the knee—a point called St 36. If a patient comes in with neck pain, generally speaking, the acupuncturist will treat a point on the gall bladder meridian, GB 20, because this meridian goes directly to the neck area. If the patient has severe pain, we use GB 39 on the outside of the ankle. Do not be surprised by the placement of the needles when you visit the acupuncturist.

What Conditions Can Be Helped by Acupuncture Treatment?

Acupuncture is not a miracle cure-all. There are diseases and conditions when acupuncture cannot help but it is remarkable how many it can.

Acupuncture is most famous for treating pain and nervous disorders. It treats many other conditions equally well however. It is especially good for many, if not most, functional disorders. In addition, acupuncturists can treat many conditions where pathological (organic) change has just started. For example, ulcers in the beginning stages can be quite responsive to acupuncture treatment.

If you are not sure your condition can be helped, or if other methods of treatment have failed, or if you have been told that there is nothing more that can be done for you, it would be best to have a consultation with an acupuncturist. Cases of multiple sclerosis, for example, have been shown to respond astonishingly well to acupuncture. Other conditions that respond well to acupuncture treatment are as follows:

Motor System and Joints—inflammation, tendonitis, rheumatoid arthritis, bursitis, lower back pain, and conditions after an accident that seem to have no cause or that do not respond to medical treatment.

Respiratory System—common cold, bronchitis, shortness of breath unrelated to serious heart conditions, bronchial asthma.

Metabolic—thyroid, anemia, early stage diabetes, hypoglycemia.

Genito-Urinary—cystitis, urethritis, water retention, chronic kidney or bladder infection, loss of sexual desire, mentally based impotence.

Gastric—cardialgia, gastralgia, gastritis, colitis, diarrhea, constipation, hepatitis (chronic), hemorrhoids, nausea.

Pediatrics—habitual vomiting, infantile paralysis, the after-effects of polio, indigestion, influenza or viral syndrome, asthma, partial deafness, fever with no apparent cause.

Neurology and psychiatry—migraine, other headaches, sciatica, hip, gout, palsy, nervous tension, neurosis, dizziness, nerve pain in the ribs or upper body, insomnia.

Orhorhinolaryngology—rhinitis or nasitis, ringing in the ears, partial loss of hearing, nasosinusitis, epistaxis (nasal hemorrhage), pharyngitis, laryngitis, muteness, trigeminal neuralgia.

Ophthalmology—eye strain, pain of the eyes, poor vision, iritis, double vision, strong sensitivity, muscles and nerves of lids that do not function properly.

Gynecology and obstetrics—irregular or lack of period, severe cramps and pain at period, abnormal or heavy flow at period, vaginitis, ovaritis, mastitis, frigidity, sterility, menopausal distress.

Dermatology—chilblains, allergic dermatitis, dry skin, acne, boils, loss of hair, warts, itching.

Other—Hay fever, multiple sclerosis, smoking, weight-loss, drug addiction, alcoholism. In the last four conditions, the patient must be highly motivated and be willing to engage in lifestyle changes including diet and exercise.

The United Nations Health Department has made statements that there are upwards to 120 diseases or conditions that acupuncture can help. In my opinion, the number is much higher. Chinese acupuncturists routinely treat over 300 diseases and conditions.

Patients with cancer ask me, "What can you do for me?" In the past few years, I've treated many cancer patients, many that I have never faced before. Some patients continue under their MD's care; some give up MD treatments or the MD says he can do nothing more for them, so they come to see me. Sometimes a cancerous tumor is removed and the cancer returns. While still under a MD's care, a patient will ask me for my opinion. Also, after chemotherapy and radiation treatments, when their bodies are weak, patients ask for my help.

In my practice I cannot say, "I can cure cancer". Why? It is against the beliefs and principles of my healing art to make that statement. I can, however, reduce the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation: lack of appetite, hair loss, low energy, poor RBS and WBC count, poor platelet count, anemia, nausea, and dizziness.

When a cancer has progressed too far, there is little I can do beyond helping a patient become more comfortable and calm. I face very difficult cases, but always try my best from my knowledge and my heart. As a healer, I always believe that there is some help available for everyone. One facet of acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine that often goes unnoticed is prevention. We believe, for example, that proper diet is more conducive to good health than treatment because, in many cases, proper diet can make treatment itself unnecessary. We believe that food is medicine and that an ounce of prevention is,

indeed, worth a pound of cure. Another meaning of prevention arises from an analytical point-of-view particular to Traditional Chinese Medicine: a special sensitivity to the holistically integrated pathways of disease and health. For example, disease and health of the lung and the kidneys are intricately related. From this perspective, a practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine when confronted with respiratory problems will also treat the kidneys and the liver to prevent problems from later arising in these critical sites.

Do All Acupuncturists Use the Same Points to Treat the Same Condition?

No. Just as in Western medicine where the doctor can choose from many different drugs to treat one condition, the acupuncturist can choose from many different meridian points. Acupuncturists are all different in what they know or how they see. For example, acupuncturists use hundreds of points in their work today, but in the Ming Dynasty, the famous Ma-Don-Yang acupuncture used no more than 12 points in treatment, sometimes fewer. Some acupuncturists criticize this method, while others believe it is not just the number of needles used that is important, but also the type of stimulation used with the needles. It comes down to a difference in how they see. Each acupuncturist may choose a different set of meridian points for a particular condition, basing the choice upon his or her training and experience. This is not to say that one is better than another, for each will do his or her best for the patient.

Occasionally, more than one acupuncturist must be tried to get the best results. In difficult cases, up to four acupuncturists should be consulted before giving up. Some acupuncturists' methods and

judgment will have more effect than others due to certain conditions, leading to some specialization. Eastern medicine, however, is not conducted in the Western sense of relying on one person to refer patients to a specialist for every condition.

What Is a Licensed Acupuncturist? How Long Has Acupuncture Been Legal in Oregon?

Acupuncture was legalized by the Oregon Legislative Assembly in regular session in 1973 (Enrolled Senate Bill 489, Chapter 451). It has been defined in the Administrative Rules of the Board of Medical Examiners as:

...an Oriental health care practice used to promote health and to treat neurological, organic, or functional disorders by the stimulation of specific points on the surface of the body by the insertion of needles. “Acupuncture” includes the treatment method of moxibustion, as well as the use of electrical, thermal, mechanical, or magnetic devices with or without needles, to stimulate acupuncture points and acupuncture meridians, and to induce acupuncture anesthesia or analgesia.

A licensed acupuncturist is a person who has met the requirements set down by the Oregon State Board of Medical Examiners, been tested by the Board, and received certification to legally practice acupuncture in the State of Oregon.

When Should I See an Acupuncturist?

It is best to see an acupuncturist in the early stages of any condition. For example, in the case of a stroke, the best time to achieve good results would be as soon as the patient has returned home from the hospital. If the stroke patient waits until the muscles have become very weak or spasm occurs, the treatments will take longer. If multiple sclerosis patients start treatment before they need a wheelchair, they will achieve much greater benefit than if they wait. In my experience, it is very difficult to help a patient to walk once they have started using a wheelchair. It is, however, more common to control bladder and bowel problems and to reduce spasm, even in wheelchair patients.

What Can I as a Patient Do to Prepare for Treatment?

It is best to tell the acupuncturist about any conditions you have that previous diagnosis did not include, such as any numbness, unusual bruising, allergies to food or drugs, cysts, tumors, and so forth. You should also tell the acupuncturist if your other practitioners have said that there is nothing more that can be done for you. Often, the acupuncturist can achieve additional results, but he or she must have a complete picture of the patient's physical and emotional conditions. Certainly, you must alert your acupuncturist about any allergies you have especially allergies toward alcohol swabs and other disinfectants.

The most important thing is to be rested and relaxed. If you need to travel some distance to reach the clinic, give yourself half an hour to relax before and after the treatment. Get a good night's sleep the night before the treatment and avoid sexual relations for twelve

hours before treatment.

Also, it is best not to drink any alcoholic beverages, including wine and beer, the day you are to be treated, or to take hot baths. Avoid extremes; do everything in moderation. It is best to eat a light meal before treatment; avoid anything that would put stress on the body, including a heavy meal.

I have found from my experience that babies and people aged 50 or older respond to acupuncture treatments most readily. Perhaps this is because young people expend their energy in many ways, which can diminish the positive effects of acupuncture treatment.

Can I Continue Taking Other Medication?

It is very important to list the pharmaceutical names and dosages of any medications you are taking. If you cannot provide this information on your first visit, you must bring it with you on your next visit. The acupuncturist can decide how to proceed and what herbal compound should be used to treat your condition.

Patients taking pain pills can cut down or discontinue these pills as their condition improves. Patients taking medication for the heart, blood pressure, thyroid, diabetes, or chronic disease of any organ, however, should continue to take the medication until a regular health care professional reevaluates them and tells them to stop taking the medication.

Can Acupuncture Help with Diet-Related Diseases?

Yes. Many conditions are at least in part related to diet. For some diseases, the acupuncturist may take suggestions for diet changes to help the condition. Diet has been of great importance in the traditional Chinese treatment for many conditions and diseases.

Many of my patients have asked me to write a diet book and to suggest a diet for their lifetime. I cannot. Why? Because thousands of years of tradition dictate that we never “write anything in stone”, never make permanent suggestions. In ancient times in China, acupuncturists were often asked to treat the king, but he might get offended and kill us if we told him how to eat for the rest of his life, so we just suggested he change his diet until he was better. Now, we just make a recommendation to you until you are well again. More importantly, since every patient is different, diets must be prescribed individually.

Some general principles, however, are applicable to most people. For example, when I was a child my parents did not allow us to drink any water that was not boiled first. Usually we drank room temperature tea made from boiled water. Now CDC doctors suggest people with low immune systems, organ transplant recipients, and AIDS patients boil their water to reduce the strain of bacteria and parasites on their bodies. Also, our water systems contain many chemicals. Filtered room temperature water is best: hot or cold water can cause problems, such as weakening the tissue of the digestive tract, in the case of hot water, and making a hypothermic body even colder, in the case of cold water.

Does Acupuncture Hurt?

Except for some sensitive individuals, the insertion of needles does not hurt. After inserting the needles, the acupuncturist will stimulate them by turning them; then you should feel some sensation, like an electrical current and/or a heavy, dull aching sensation. For instance, if a needle is inserted in the elbow area, you should ideally have some sensation up to your shoulder, down the arm, or to the hand. This is energy moving. If you are very frightened of the needles or do not want to be in treatment for other reasons, you have little chance of successful treatment. In this case, you should wait until you feel more comfortable about it before beginning treatment.

What Training Is Needed to Become an Acupuncturist?

Traditionally, students worked directly with an individual teacher like an apprentice with a master; today, most acupuncturists go to an acupuncture school. In either case, the students must study basic science-including human anatomy and physiology-and the history of Chinese Traditional Medicine. They also study the history of the famous doctors. In addition, they must study diagnosis, prescription formulas, and specialties, such as internal conditions, external conditions, the effects of accidents, gynecology, eye problems, and other specific body systems.

It may be relatively easy to put needles in, but to know where the needles must be placed to produce the desired effect demands an understanding of acupuncture principles that can only be acquired through continuing education. The results of yesterday may not be

enough for today; old diseases return and new ones appear.

How Many Treatments Will I Need?

The total number of treatments depends on the condition being treated, the length and severity of that condition, your general state of health, and how you respond to treatment. Acupuncture is not a miracle; it is a medical treatment. Most acupuncturists will not accept a patient for only one treatment.

Usually a set of treatments is recommended to see if a patient is responsive to acupuncture. After this, it is easier to get an approximate idea of the total number of treatments needed. When a patient sees me for tennis elbow or carpal tunnel syndrome, for the condition enough, I try internal and external herbal remedies and four more acupuncture treatments. If there is no change by then, I recommend the patient stop the treatments-not because acupuncture cannot help them, but perhaps that my particular knowledge cannot help them.

Many conditions, such as arthritis or multiple sclerosis, will improve dramatically after a few treatments. Does this mean you should then stop treatments? No. You may need infrequent treatment once the condition has been controlled, but your body will need to be

“reminded” to keep a healthy state throughout your life, like a periodic tune up for your car.

In any case, it is best to discuss your individual case with your acupuncturist. If there is more your acupuncturist can do for you, he or she will tell you.