

- Acupuncture

SCIENCE

HOW ACUPUNCTURE WORKS

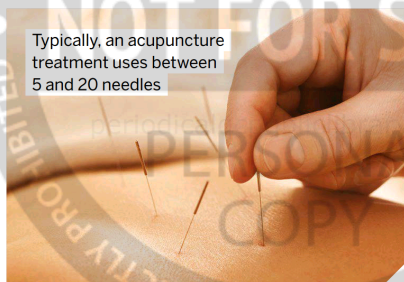
WORDS AILSA HARVEY

Fine needles have been inserted into the skin for centuries as a traditional medicine that can have full-body benefits

In Western medicine, chemical painkillers and other lab-produced drugs are often prescribed for common ailments. However, an ancient Chinese medical practice involves the controlled insertion of needles beneath the skin – an alternative medicine that prompts the body to release its own natural remedies. This includes endorphins, which are pain-relieving hormones. The production of endorphins can be manipulated by stimulating sensory nerves across the body in a process called acupuncture.

Compared to other modern treatments, there's less significant scientific evidence detailing the benefits of acupuncture. However, it is often recommended alongside modern medicine for chronic pain and tension headaches. Most acupuncture patients seek private companies for this treatment. During a

Typically, an acupuncture treatment uses between 5 and 20 needles



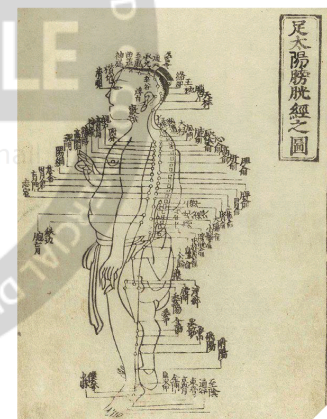
session, the patient will sit or lie down while the practitioner inserts needles a few centimetres in length into precise points across the body. The areas and number of inserted needles depend on a person's symptoms. Initially, the acupuncture process creates a tingling or aching sensation, which is left in the body for between 5 and 30 minutes.

Did you know?

There are over 300 acupuncture points

ANCIENT ORIGINS

In the year 6000 BCE, acupuncture was practised in China using long animal bones and carved stones. Traditionally, the procedure was carried out to control an energy in the body called qi, with the benefits felt from acupuncture credited to the balancing of qi. Traditional acupuncture practitioners carry out this treatment following the belief that the interrupted flow of qi causes illness. The 12 main channels of qi are detailed in the oldest document to mention acupuncture, *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*, from 100 BCE. Between 1368 and 1644, when acupuncture became a widespread practice across China, 365 acupuncture points were documented. As Western medicine adopted acupuncture, it referred less to the channels of qi and instead became centred around physiology and muscle relaxation.



This drawing from 1716 shows the main acupuncture points

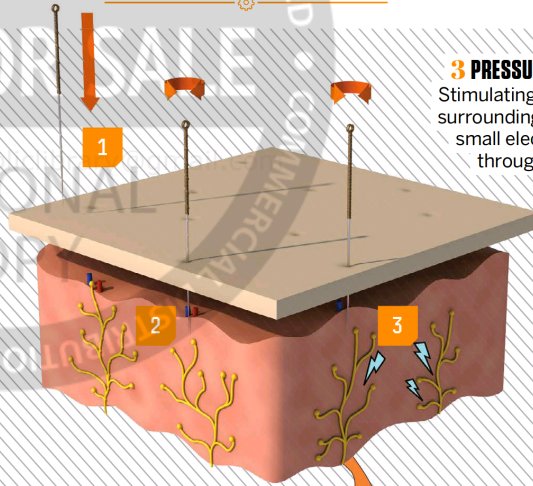
DID YOU KNOW? Acupuncture has been used to treat over 200 health symptoms

NEEDLE STIMULATION

How does acupuncture interact with the central nervous system?

1 ACUPUNCTURE POINT

The needles are inserted underneath the skin – from a few millimetres deep on the forehead to two to three centimetres at the back of the neck.



3 PRESSURE SENSATIONS

Stimulating the nerves and surrounding tissue triggers small electric impulses through the body.

2 NERVE ENDINGS

Acupuncture points are close to peripheral nerve endings, blood vessels and mast cells – the white blood cells that trigger inflammation.

4 ENDORPHIN RESPONSE

Nerve stimulation can cause the body to release hormones called endorphins, which are the body's natural painkillers.

6 MESSENGER RELEASE

Chemical messengers are released to create an electrical signal through the nerves.

7 NERVE SIGNAL

Acupuncture pressure stimulates the central nervous system, relaying signals to the brain and spine.

8 HYPOTHALAMUS AND PITUITARY GLAND

Acupuncture can activate these regions of the brain, which impact blood pressure, mood, wound healing and anxiety.

“Initially, the acupuncture process creates a tingling or aching sensation”



5 FACTS ACUPOINTS

1 LI4 (HEGU)

Found between the thumb and index finger at the back of the hand, pressure at this point can relieve headaches.

2 LV3 (TAI CHONG)

This point, at the top of the foot between the big toe and second toe, relieves stress, menstrual pain and insomnia.

3 PC6 (NEIGUAN)

On the inner forearm, about three fingerbreadths beneath the wrist, this acupressure point soothes nausea.

4 SP6 (SANYINJIAO)

Just above the ankle bone, this point on the calf has been used in acupuncture to relieve digestive pain.

5 GV20 (BAIHUI)

At the top of the head, GV20 stops headaches and is said to help with mental clarity.

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