



ACUPUNCTURE – Who Needs It?

By Kate Carter, M.Ac., L.Ac., Dipl.Ac., Licensed Acupuncturist
Center for Mind-Body Therapies
5 N. Bentz Street
Frederick, MD 21701
301-631-2936 x. 260
www.acupuncturewithkate.com

Acupuncture is often spoken of as “alternative” medicine. This would seem to suggest that it is a therapy to be considered instead of or as opposed to allopathic/western medical care, or that it is new and unproven. Neither is true.

Acupuncture is one of the oldest and most commonly used forms of traditional medicine in the world -- dating back at least 3,000 years. While we are lucky to live in the West where sophisticated medical treatment is available to us for acute illness and injury and to provide necessary surgical procedures, acupuncture can treat conditions that western medicine has been unable to resolve, such as chronic illness, or when the patient says, “I am suffering with xyz symptom”, and the doctor says, “I can’t find anything wrong with you.” It intervenes subtly to change our experience of disease (or dis-ease, lack of ease). It also can be used before and after surgery to minimize its ill effects and enhance the healing process. There is much attention being paid lately to the many pharmaceuticals we have trusted for years suddenly being shown to have dire, life threatening side effects!

Acupuncture is a process that, without the use of drugs, renews the body's natural healing ability to restore health to its optimum state.

In addition to treating many physical conditions, acupuncture is a wonderful way to take care of ourselves before anything goes awry. We do not need to be "sick" in order to seek acupuncture treatment. As a matter of fact, acupuncture is a way to keep life flowing within and without our beings so that balance and harmony and good health can be maintained.

Acupuncture is a "complementary" form of healthcare that can be used along with more conventional forms of treatment, to enhance its value in treating our symptoms.

We are a culture that predominantly waits to attend to our body's discomfort until it is screaming at us, rather than noticing smaller signs of distress before they show up in the body as illness....such as how difficult it is to fall asleep some nights with our spinning thoughts, or how easily angered we are over "the silliest things," or perhaps we have felt a terrible sadness since the death of a loved one and have not allowed ourselves to fully grieve so it erodes our sense of well-being, or maybe it's been years since we've been in a truly loving relationship with someone, or maybe we are tired of working hard for a boss who never acknowledges our importance or value and we are becoming resentful and bitter. These situations, often lumped together and called "stress," take a toll on us, and can manifest as symptoms in the body. If we learn to recognize the signs of illness before they develop into disease, we may be able to fend it off before more serious intervention is necessary.

Thousands of years ago in China when acupuncture was first developed, the patient paid the doctor to keep her well, and then, when she got sick, the doctor took care of her for nothing! The idea, those many thousands of years ago, was that one stayed healthy by living a balanced life, eating nourishing foods, exercising, receiving regular preventive care (acupuncture,

massage, herbal remedies), living in harmony with the earth and its seasons, obeying the laws of nature and adapting attitudes and behaviors that would support us to stay well and healthy. Now, in this culture, we pay when we get sick...and pay and pay and pay!! We are a culture involved more with "sick care" than "health care" and we have become accustomed to "fixing" symptoms instead of preventing them from showing up in the first place.

The world in which we live has many pitfalls and dangers which impede the way to optimum health, and so, naturally, we cannot always avoid situations that make us "sick." We live in a highly stressful world carrying many responsibilities, and needing to respond to multiple demands made upon our time and energy. Our environment is polluted with toxins and chemicals that we cannot avoid, and modern technology, while on the one hand creating time-saving machines and devices, has also kept us from being truly in touch with our environment, living close to nature and truly mindful of the seasons within ourselves, as well as "out there" in the world. Acupuncture treatment is a way of bringing awareness that we do still have control over our own health, and your practitioner can reawaken you to how you can regain that control and have a positive effect on your well-being.

The World Health Organization and the National Institutes of Health have each recognized **some** of the conditions that acupuncture can help (see this site under Conditions Treated with Acupuncture). Additionally, acupuncture helps to address, by manipulation of the body's energy flow through the insertion of tiny needles, the underlying causes of these, and many other, conditions. Therefore, rather than simply removing the symptom, the actual cause is treated, promoting longer lasting health and wellness. Your acupuncture practitioner becomes your partner in the healing process, spending time with you, guiding you, and restoring the body's natural healing ability so that you become fully the person you are intended to be.

Who needs acupuncture? Perhaps we all do!