

# ACUPUNCTURE

## FAST FACTS

- According to a study published in JAMA Network Open in 2022, the use of non-traditional medical care, including acupuncture, among adult pain patients in the U.S. increased from 19% in 2002 to 37% in 2022.<sup>1</sup>
- In January 2020, the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services approved the use of acupuncture for chronic low back pain.
- Leading medical centers Johns Hopkins, Duke, Cleveland Clinic and those in the military and Veterans Health Administration integrate acupuncture into their care
- Sessions typically cost between \$65-\$125 per treatment, some of which might be covered or discounted by health insurance.<sup>2</sup> Acupressure sessions tend to be less expensive, and acupressure can be self-administered.

## WHAT IS ACUPUNCTURE?

Acupuncture is a form of traditional Chinese medicine. A trained specialist called an acupuncturist uses tiny, sterile needles to stimulate specific points on the body. A similar treatment, called acupressure, uses pressure but no needles. The points that are stimulated are called acupoints. Electroacupuncture is a type of acupuncture that uses mild electrical stimulation along with the needles. While researchers are not yet completely sure how acupuncture works, it is believed to trigger the brain and nervous system to release chemicals such as endorphins that can lift your mood and relieve pain.

## WHAT DOES ACUPUNCTURE TREAT?

In the last 30 years, people have increasingly sought to integrate complementary medicine, including TCM, into their healthcare. So far, research shows that acupuncture can help treat:

- Neck, low back, and knee pain<sup>3</sup>
- Fibromyalgia symptoms
- Allergies and asthma
- Stress urinary incontinence
- Chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting
- Headaches and migraine
- Language difficulties after a stroke
- Menopause and sleep problems<sup>4</sup>

To learn more about how acupuncture works for a specific health concern, visit the [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health](#), U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH).<sup>5</sup>

## Are there any side effects or safety concerns I should know about?

Acupuncture is widely considered safe when your provider uses disposable sterile needles. However, all medical procedures involve some risk. Talk to your doctor and acupuncturist about the following:

### Safety

- **Pregnancy**—Acupuncture can cause contractions that can bring on labor.
- **Emergencies**—If you need urgent medical attention, call 911.
- **Surgery**—Acupuncture is not a substitute for any surgery.
- **Malignant tumors**—Acupuncture should not be used to treat a malignant tumor (cancer). The site of the tumor should never be needled.

- **Bleeding disorders**—Check with your doctor before having acupuncture if you have a bleeding disorder or take blood-thinning medication.

### Side Effects

- Slight bleeding and bruising at the acupoint site.
- **Fainting**—People can feel faint during acupuncture. Lying down is recommended for the first treatment, and needles should be removed if you feel faint.
- **Convulsions**—If you have had convulsions (fits) in the past, please tell your acupuncturist. He or she should remove the needles if you have a convulsion during treatment.
- **Pain**—It is unlikely, but some patients may experience pain during the treatment.

## Can acupuncture help with cancer symptoms and side effects?

Yes. Acupuncture is often used to treat cancer-related symptoms and side effects. These include fatigue,<sup>6</sup> pain, digestive symptoms including nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, sleep problems, anxiety, depression, and dry mouth.

The American Society for Clinical Oncology and Society for Integrative Oncology specifically recommend acupuncture to help women with joint pain related to taking breast cancer drugs called aromatase inhibitors.<sup>7</sup>

We need more high-quality research to fully understand the mechanisms and optimize the use of acupuncture in cancer care, but we do know it can help a number of cancer-related conditions.

## What training/certifications do acupuncturists have?

- Most states require that acupuncturists have a diploma from a program accredited by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. Acupuncturists usually obtain a master's degree in acupuncture, which requires 2 or 3 years of training.
- Other providers may do acupuncture, including medical doctors, chiropractors, naturopaths and detox technicians. Be sure you understand your provider's training and whether it suits your needs and condition.
- Visit [www.nccaom.org/state-licensure](http://www.nccaom.org/state-licensure) for your state's requirements.

## How can I find an acupuncturist near me?

The following information can help you locate an acupuncturist in your area:

### American Academy of Medical Acupuncture

310-379-8261

[www.medicalacupuncture.org/Find-an-Acupuncturist](http://www.medicalacupuncture.org/Find-an-Acupuncturist)

### National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

904-598-1005

[www.nccaom.org/find-a-practitioner-directory](http://www.nccaom.org/find-a-practitioner-directory)

### Acufinder

877-630-3600

[www.acufinder.com](http://www.acufinder.com)

### Acupuncture Now Foundation

[acupuncturenowfoundation.org/find-qualified-acupuncturist-usa](http://acupuncturenowfoundation.org/find-qualified-acupuncturist-usa)

## How much will an acupuncture session cost?

The cost of acupuncture treatments will vary based on location, provider, and extent of services needed. Generally, acupuncture treatments range from \$65 to \$125 per treatment session. Some conditions may be covered or discounted by insurance.

## Talk to your doctor

Let your medical providers know that you would like to include acupuncture in the tools you are using to improve your health.

## What is acupressure?<sup>8</sup>

Like acupuncture, acupressure is a traditional Chinese medicine therapy. It also involves specific points on the body called acupoints. However, there are no needles. Providers use their fingers, palms, elbows, or special devices to apply pressure to these points.

Acupressure can help a range of conditions, from sleep problems to depression. It can be effective for morning sickness in pregnancy, including severe symptoms.

## How is it different from acupuncture?

- Acupuncture generally provides deeper stimulation. It may be preferred for more severe or chronic conditions.
- Acupressure is often considered gentler and may be used for milder issues. You can even learn to apply acupressure techniques on yourself.
- Acupressure is generally safe and does not require specialized equipment.

## Is acupressure used in cancer treatment?

Acupressure has shown some benefits for cancer patients, especially with treatment side effects.

- It can help reduce cancer-related fatigue.<sup>9</sup>
- It may help with nausea and vomiting after surgery or chemotherapy.
- It may help manage pain, stress, depression, and anxiety.

Do not use acupuncture or acupressure by itself to treat cancer or any serious illness. Use these treatments under a doctor's care, along with standard medical treatments.

## What is integrative health?

Integrative health is the pursuit of personal health and wellbeing foremost, while addressing disease as needed, with the support of a health team dedicated to all proven approaches – conventional, complementary and self-care.

## My notes and questions

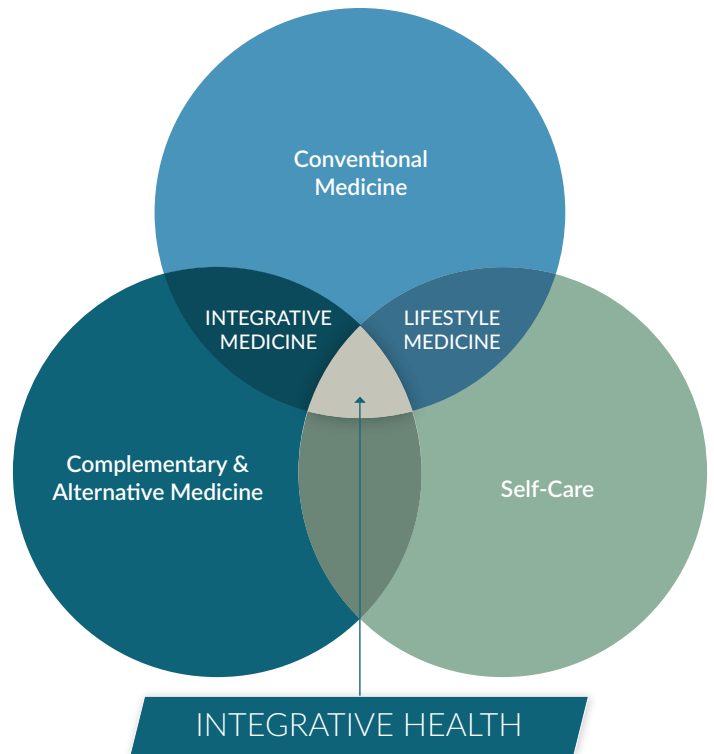
---

---

---

---

---



**References:**

1. Allen J, Mak SS, Begashaw M, et al. Use of acupuncture for adult health conditions, 2013 to 2021: A systematic review. JAMA Netw Open. 2022 Nov 1;5(11):e2243665.
2. Fan AY, Wang DD, Ouyang H, et al. Acupuncture price in forty-one metropolitan regions in the United States: An out-of-pocket cost analysis based on OkCoplay.com. J Integr Med. 2019 Sep;17(5):315-320.
3. Flynn DM. Chronic musculoskeletal pain: nonpharmacologic, noninvasive treatments. Am Fam Physician. 2020 Oct 15;102(8):465-477. PMID: 33064421.
4. Yin X, Gou M, Xu J, Dong B, Yin P, Masquelin F, Wu J, Lao L, Xu S. Efficacy and safety of acupuncture treatment on primary insomnia: a randomized controlled trial. Sleep Med. 2017 Sep;37:193-200.
5. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Acupuncture: What you need to know. Updated October 2022. Available at <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/acupuncture-what-you-need-to-know>. Accessed August 14, 2024.
6. Jang A, Brown C, Lamoury G, et al. The effects of acupuncture on cancer-related fatigue: updated systematic review and meta-analysis. Integr Cancer Ther. 2020 Jan-Dec;19:1534735420949679.
7. Mao JJ, Ismaila N, Bao T, et al. Integrative medicine for pain management in oncology: Society for Integrative Oncology-ASCO Guideline. J Clin Oncol. 2022 Dec 1;40(34):3998-4024.
8. University of Michigan Health Rogel Cancer Center. Acupressure. Available at <https://www.rogelcancercenter.org/support/symptoms-and-side-effects/alternative-medicine/acupressure#top>. Accessed August 14, 2024.
9. Zick SM, Harris RE. Acupressure for cancer-related fatigue. ASCO Post. Available at <https://ascopost.com/issues/july-25-2018/acupressure-for-cancer-related-fatigue/>. Accessed August 14, 2024.