

Acupuncture

Integrated and Complementary Medicine



What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a method of stimulating specific points on the body using various techniques, primarily the use of small, thin needles to penetrate the skin. It is common in traditional Chinese medicine and is becoming more widely accepted and incorporated into treatment plans in the U.S. According to a study conducted by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), approximately 3.1 million American adults used acupuncture in 2007.¹

Acupuncture may be used as an integrative treatment method as part of a comprehensive treatment plan. Because of the wide variety of reasons for seeking acupuncture as a part of healthcare, each patient may experience different sensations including relaxation, energy, and possibly soreness or pain. Most states require a license to practice acupuncture so be sure to check a provider's credentials and coordinate any diagnosis or feedback from the acupuncturist with your health care provider.

Why is it used?

Acupuncture is most commonly used for treatment of chronic pain. In addition, it is used for treatment of headaches, localized pain in the neck and back, anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Most recently, it was introduced as a potential treatment option for injuries commonly found in the military including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI).²

Benefits

Acupuncture is being increasingly used by service members, particularly those with chronic pain, anxiety, and sleep concerns. While many find success with using acupuncture, the proven benefits from scientific studies are inconclusive. Several small studies have shown that acupuncture may be beneficial in treating PTSD, but more expansive research is required to fully validate this claim.^{2,3}

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Availability

Acupuncture may be available to active duty service members at some military medical treatment facilities. Check with your primary care provider about possible options for seeking this treatment.

How can I learn more?

- [National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#)
- [Acupuncture for Pain Management](#)

References

1. Acupuncture – An Introduction. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/introduction.htm>. Published December 2007. Accessed 7 July 2014.
2. Acupuncture May Help Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. <http://nccam.nih.gov/research/results/spotlight/092107.htm>. Published 1 June 2007. Accessed 7 July 2014.
3. Jonas WB, Niemtow RC, Helms JM, et al. The Use of Acupuncture in the U.S. Military: Challenges and Opportunities. *Med Acupunct*. 2011;Vol 23(Nov 2011):219-227.