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## Acupuncture: Why It Works

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By Dr. Mercola

More than 3 million Americans receive acupuncture each year, and its use is increasing. While there are a variety of acupuncture techniques, those typically used in the U.S. incorporate traditions from China, Japan and Korea and involve penetrating your skin with a thin needle at certain points on your body. The needle is then stimulated by hand or electrically. Acupuncture has been in use for thousands of years around the globe, and it has withstood the test of time because it *works* to safely relieve many common health complaints. *How* it works has remained largely a mystery, but last year researchers revealed a biochemical reaction that may be responsible for some of acupuncture's beneficial effects.

### Scientists Reveal How Acupuncture Reduces Inflammation and Pain

An animal study looking into the effects of acupuncture on muscle inflammation revealed that manual acupuncture downregulates (or turns off) pro-inflammatory cells known as M1 macrophages. At the same time, it upregulates (or activates) anti-inflammatory M2 macrophages, thereby reducing pain and swelling. This is an effective strategy because M2 macrophages are a source of anti-inflammatory interleukin-10 (IL-10), a cytokine involved in immune response. It's thought that upregulating M2 macrophages leads to an increase in IL-10, which subsequently helps relieve pain and inflammation. The Epoch Times reported: It's likely that acupuncture works via a variety of mechanisms. In 2010, for instance, it was found that acupuncture activates pain-suppressing receptors and increased the concentration of the neurotransmitter adenosine in local tissues. Adenosine slows down your brain's activity and induces sleepiness. According to a Nature Neuroscience press release:

### Acupuncture Influences Your Body on Multiple Levels

With documented use dating back more than 2,500 years, acupuncture is based on the premise that there are more than 2,000 acupuncture points in the human body, which are connected by bioenergetic pathways known as meridians. According to traditional medicine, it is through these pathways that Qi, or energy, flows, and when the pathway is blocked the disruptions can lead to imbalances and chronic disease. Acupuncture is proven to impact a number of chronic health conditions, and it may work, in part, by stimulating your central nervous system to release natural chemicals that alter bodily systems, pain and other biological processes. Evidence suggests that acupuncture may also work by:

- Stimulating the conduction of electromagnetic signals, which may release immune system cells or pain-killing chemicals

- Activation of your body’s natural opioid system, which may help reduce pain or induce sleep
- Stimulation of your hypothalamus and pituitary gland, which impact numerous body systems
- Change in the secretion of neurotransmitters and neurohormones, which may positively influence brain chemistry

**Acupuncture for Relief of High Blood Pressure**

There is some evidence that acupuncture may help lower high blood pressure while also relieving associated anxiety, headaches, dizziness, palpitations and tinnitus. It’s known that high blood pressure leads to elevated concentrations of inflammation-causing tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF-α) and TNF-α-stimulated endothelin (ET), peptides involved in constricting blood vessels and raising blood pressure. It’s thought that acupuncture may downregulate TNF-α and ET, thereby reducing blood pressure. In another study of patients with high blood pressure, 30 minutes of electroacupuncture (in which the needles are stimulated with electricity) a week led to slight declines in blood pressure. Study co-author Dr. John Longhurst, a cardiologist at the University of California, Irvine, told WebMD, "Potentially, blood pressure can be kept low with a monthly follow-up treatment."

Accupuncture has been proven effective for the following diseases:

✓ Adverse reactions to radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy	✓ Allergic rhinitis (including hay fever)	✓ Biliary colic
✓ Depression (including depressive neurosis and depression following stroke)	✓ Acute bacillary dysentery	✓ Primary dysmenorrhea
✓ Acute epigastralgia (in peptic ulcer, acute and chronic gastritis, and gastrospasm)	✓ Facial pain (including craniomandibular disorders)	✓ Headache
✓ Essential hypertension	✓ Primary hypotension	✓ Induction of labor
✓ Knee pain	✓ Leukopenia	✓ Low back pain
✓ Correction of malposition of fetus	✓ Morning sickness	✓ Nausea and vomiting
✓ Neck pain	✓ Pain in dentistry (including dental pain and temporomandibular dysfunction)	✓ Periarthritis of shoulder
✓ Postoperative pain	✓ Renal colic	✓ Rheumatoid arthritis
✓ <a href="#">Sciatica</a>	✓ Sprain	✓ Stroke
✓ Tennis elbow		