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Blue Heron Acupuncture & Herbs
DE LAc #CQ-0000040

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Introduction to Acupuncture

What is it?

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting hair-thin sterile disposable needles into the skin at specific points on the body to help the body heal itself. Different styles of acupuncture emphasize different areas of the body as the best places to insert needles. For example, some styles typically place needles below the elbows and knees; some on the scalp or in the ears; some styles place needles into the site of pain like your back or hip. Most acupuncturists combine many styles depending on what's needed by the individual in any given treatment. Ultimately, acupuncture is about getting your qi (aka life force or energy) unstuck and moving freely thereby reducing pain and improving overall health. Essentially, I call acupuncture "energetic plumbing".

How does it work?

Over 2000 years ago through observation and experimentation, the first practitioners of acupuncture and Chinese medicine mapped out channels in the body where the qi flows and accumulates. Imagine rivers of energy flowing through the body. The channels that the Chinese (and Indian) practitioners envisioned flow along lines of fascia and nerve tracts that Western medical anatomy discovered through dissection. The acupuncture channels are NOT the same as fascial planes and nerve tracts, but they have a lot of similarities in terms of location in the body. The idea behind acupuncture is to stimulate an acupuncture point to trigger the body into acting. What the body does in response to any given acupuncture point has to do with the nature of the point – it's point prescription. To my mind the intersection of East & West in terms of explaining how acupuncture works is best illustrated by fascia. Dr Helene Langevin has documented more than 40 things that happen when an acupuncture needle is inserted into tissues; one thing that happens is that fibroblasts secrete various substances into the surrounding tissue like ATP (adenosine triphosphate). ATP is the 'energy currency' of living cells and it transfers chemical energy to power cellular activities through cellular respiration.

[\(https://oshercenter.org/2017/09/18/acutalks-interviews-dr-helene-langevin-connective-tissue-plays-role-acupuncture/\)](https://oshercenter.org/2017/09/18/acutalks-interviews-dr-helene-langevin-connective-tissue-plays-role-acupuncture/)

Why would I want to have it done to me?

The World Health Organization has deemed acupuncture appropriate for a wide variety of issues including: stress, depression, headache, PMS, insomnia, nausea, addictions, and various types of pain such as back, neck, sciatica, facial, knee, and elbow. The number one reason people seek acupuncture is relief from back pain followed by neck & shoulder pain. Acupuncture practiced in the context of Asian medicine is designed to address any issue whether it is physical, mental, or emotional. In Asian medicine all issues are inter-related. The goal is to understand the root issue so as it can be addressed along with any 'branch' issues. For example, someone may have low back pain as a branch symptom, and the root cause in terms of Asian medicine is a deficiency of Spleen and Kidney energy due to inherited constitution, diet (too much sugar & caffeine), lack of exercise along with too much sitting, aging and a lot of worry. In addition to relieving back pain, your acupuncturist would work with you to address what root causes can be addressed thereby helping to prevent future back pain.



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Where do I go to get it?

Acupuncture practiced in the context of Asian medicine is offered by any state licensed acupuncturist (LAc). Medical acupuncture is a type of acupuncture that includes the use of only those points that the medical community considers 'proven' to work and is practiced by MDs. Depending on the licensing requirements of the state chiropractors can also do acupuncture. Physical therapists can do 'dry needling' which is to my mind a subset of acupuncture focused on activating the motor points of muscles to relieve pain. Any licensed practitioner of acupuncture in Delaware can be verified on the Office of Professions website: <https://dpronline.delaware.gov/mylicense%20weblookup/Search.aspx>

Miscellaneous Questions

Does it hurt?

Not really. Typically, what you feel after the initial slight prick of the acupuncture needle is a pulling or warming sensation. Some people feel nothing at all. What you feel is unique to you. Any needle can be moved to be more comfortable. Also, if you really hate needles, seeds or magnets can be used that are placed on the acupuncture point to stimulate it without puncturing the skin.

How often should I get it?

Depends on your condition, how long you have had it and what it is. Here's some conventional wisdom:

- **most issues** = 2x per week until 50% improvement than 1x weekly until resolved
- **excruciatingly painful** = everyday treatments UNTIL IT CHANGES FOR THE BETTER
- **gynecological pain/irregularity** = weekly UNTIL NORMAL; then taper off to only week before cycle
- **somewhat chronic** - had for less than 1 year = once a week for 8-10 weeks then re-evaluate
- **long-term chronic** - had for more than 1 year = 2-3x per week for 8-10 weeks then re-evaluate
- **wellness and prevention** = 1x weekly before travel, during transitions, season change, high stress

The main point is that acupuncture is a process that requires continual re-evaluation. When you are done is really up to you.

Does insurance cover it & how much does it cost?

Costs for acupuncture depend on the number of sets of needles, whether any other techniques are used and where you get it. My base acupuncture fees are: Initial acupuncture (1.5 hrs) \$140, Private acupuncture (1 hr) \$80. Electrostimulation of the needles cost \$15 more. You can pay with cash, check or Mastercard, Visa. I ask you pay up-front & I bill your insurance for you so you get reimbursed. Some acupuncturists take insurance and your co-pays and others don't take insurance at all. Ask first before you book an appointment how the acupuncturist handles insurance, what the fees are and how you can pay.

What else do you do?

Currently I offer private acupuncture sessions including additional techniques like acupressure/trigger point therapy, gua sha, cupping and electrostimulation depending on your individual needs, and Chinese herbal consultations. The goal of Blue Heron Acupuncture & Herbs is to offer you the benefits of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine in a cost-effective, an empowering and individualized manner.