



MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN

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Pain of joints, bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments is the commonest reason why people consult acupuncturists. Acupuncture and herbs are very effective for reducing pain and encouraging healing. I've had good success with my patients.

What Can Acupuncture Help?

Back & Neck: muscular pain or strain, pain of herniated disc, sciatic pain, neck and upper back pain, neck pain and headaches...

Joints: all joints in the body, from fingers and toes to the shoulders, knees, hips, jaw...

Inflammation: arthritis (both rheumatoid and osteo), Morton's neuroma, strains, sprains, deep bruises, painful scars, inflammation associated with broken bones, fibromyalgia, plantar fasciitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, peripheral neuralgia, post surgical pain after hip or knee replacement or laminectomy, shingles pain...

Functional Imbalances: scoliosis, pronating ankles, uneven shoulder height, chronic stiff neck and/or headaches...

How Does Acupuncture Help?

Acupuncture care includes several techniques that reduce pain and inflammation, improve circulation, and improve musculoskeletal health and balance. Using the most famous technique—needling--your acupuncturist will insert very fine flexible needles at selected *acupoints*. Some of those points will be quite far from your site of pain...but have been shown over the centuries to help. Your acupuncturist may also tape tiny *acuballs* to points on your ear that refer to the region of your body that is suffering. These remain in place so you can continue your treatment outside the office by rubbing these spots yourself. Other techniques include warming herbs (*moxibustion*) over acupoints, cupping or rubbing over stagnant regions, electroacupuncture or cold laser treatments, and providing herbal combinations long known to reduce musculoskeletal pain.

What You Can You Do For Yourself

1. Keep moving!

Perform gentle stretches, 10 or more times per day for a few seconds at a time. Stretching improves circulation of blood and Qi (energy), and where there is good circulation there is usually less pain. Since the area is already sore, limit your stretches to brief periods, but stretch often. Frequency signals the body to care for the sore region, and keeps circulation moving. Also rub the sore area (or ear acuballs if applied). Ask your acupuncturist to show you exercises to serve your needs. For long term self-care it is wise to take classes in yoga or tai chi. Both of the last mentioned loosen ligaments, strengthen bones and improve flexibility and balance—important after trauma, surgery, or with aging!

2. Drink water!

Circulation is better when you are well hydrated, and water is what the body uses to carry toxins--such as the products of overuse and inflammation--out of the sore region and out of the body.

Since the goal is good hydration, avoid dehydrating liquids such as coffee, tea, sodas, salty foods, alcohol, and strong sweets. Salt and sugar both attract and hold water--avoid them because you want water to move toxins out of your body. Caffeine and alcohol are dehydrating so they dry out the very areas you are trying to hydrate and de-toxify.

Your very best drink is water. If tap water doesn't taste good, try several bottled waters until you find one you like. For a change of flavor, squeeze a bit of lemon or other fruit juice into your water. Do not drink pure fruit juice to avoid giving yourself a sugar high.

Avoid sports drinks that are sweetened with sugar/corn syrup or with artificial sweeteners. Avoid artificial sweeteners because they add toxins to the body. A sweet sports drink is appropriate if you are exhausted and have sweated a great deal, but is otherwise better avoided.

Finally, eat plenty of fresh green and yellow vegetables and fresh fruits. They are excellent sources of water and electrolytes, and their fiber keeps you regular. Bowel movements also move toxins out of the body.

3. Control Pain!

- Arnica is a flower that grows in the Alps in Europe and has been used for many centuries to stop pain and heal inflammation of muscles, joints, and ligaments. Buy it in homeopathic preparations--cream or gel to rub on, and pills to take internally--it's effective, and non-toxic in homeopathic doses.
- Protease enzyme is effective for reducing inflammation especially combined with calcium & kelp—consult an enzyme therapist for guidance.
- For severe or chronic pain, ask your acupuncturist for Chinese herbs to diminish pain and inflammation—there are special combinations for backs, neck and shoulder, headache, etc.

4. Use nutrients that heal and prevent injury.

- Use a high-quality multi-vitamin-mineral daily—be sure it is chelated with amino acids or fructooligosaccharides for best absorption (see *Super-5 Nutrients* Handout).
- The following are natural substances that are analgesic and anti-inflammatory—ask for guidance at your apothecary, herbal provisions or natural foods store: MSM. Boswellia. Turmeric (Cucurmin).
- Consult an enzyme therapist for enzyme combinations that counter musculoskeletal pain.

5. Get enough rest but don't overdo it!

Rest the sore region, and sleep 6-8 hours/day, but otherwise, **keep moving**. Remember, when you are lying or sitting still, your circulation also takes a rest. Stretch gently before sleep, drink water upon awakening, and then do “start the day” exercises to get your circulation going. If you do desk work, stand up, stretch, walk around at least once per hour. Keep drinking water!