



Japanese Acupuncture: Great for the Whole Family!

If you have ever had Acupuncture, know someone who has, have been sitting on the fence about receiving Acupuncture, have seen a demonstration on television or read an article, are curious about or are downright afraid of receiving Acupuncture you need to continue reading this article. What you thought and feared about Acupuncture needles, the treatments and it being painful is completely opposite to what you may have believed. Prepare to be pleasantly surprised and amazed with what you are about to read regarding the differences of Japanese Acupuncture!

What is Japanese Acupuncture?

A common misconception in Western society is that everything to do with Acupuncture is due to the Chinese. Yes, it's true that Acupuncture originated in China over two thousand years ago. Its theory and most of its Acupuncture points are used throughout the world today. However, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) emerged in Japan in the sixth century and through its own 1400-year evolutionary process, Traditional Japanese Medicine (TJM) including Japanese Acupuncture has taken on their own unique characteristics. These include:

Gentle, Refined and Painless Needle Technique

Japanese Acupuncturists use the thinnest needles available and are extensively trained to have the most delicate technique. Fewer needles are also typically used and it is not uncommon for the Acupuncturist to use only one or two needles. The standard needle used in Japanese Acupuncture is approximately the diameter of 2-3 human hairs (0.12-0.14 gauge), differing from the standard Chinese needle that is roughly 2 ½ times as thick.

The use of electric stimulation is also commonplace amongst Chinese style Acupuncturists and is one of the reasons for the necessity of thicker needles. Electric stimulation is similar to the TENS unit that Physical Therapists or Chiropractors use except in Chinese style Acupuncture small alligator clips are attached to the needle and an electric current runs through the needle for stimulatory effect. The Japanese believe in the "less is more" approach and as such Japanese style Acupuncturists rarely use electric stimulation due to its invasive and often painful effect on the patient. The use of thin needles ensures a calm, relaxing and painless treatment for the patient. To test this, gently touch the corner of your fingernail to the skin of your opposite hand to experience what the Japanese Acupuncture needles feel like. Indeed, Acupuncture does not need to be painful to be effective!

How Deep Does the Needle Go?

In Japanese Acupuncture, we believe that the body's most responsive "Qi" (energy) lies on, or just beneath the skin surface. From this perspective, it is unnecessary to needle deeply or to produce a strong needle sensation. The needle is often not inserted but only contacts the skin surface for a few seconds in order to achieve the desired result. When the needle does break the skin or is left in place, it generally penetrates 1-2 mm. In fact, the needle is placed so shallow that it usually flops over and lays flat on the skin, differing from other Acupuncture styles where the needle penetrates from 1-5 inches.

Hands on Approach

A strong emphasis on palpating (gently massaging) the body is employed to accurately diagnose and locate points prior to needle contact. This hands-on emphasis has traditional roots, as many Acupuncturists in Japan were blind and as such had to rely heavily on their sense and gentle palpation techniques. Currently thirty percent of Japan's Acupuncturists are blind! Japanese Acupuncture is a very attentive modality; focusing on the needs of the patient. Treatments are generally 1-hour in length with approximately 40-minutes of one-on-one time with the Acupuncturist. This type of attentiveness is rarely found in any healthcare setting today.

Root and Branch Treatment

Many other healing modalities, including Western Medicine, focus exclusively on the patient's symptoms without gaining a deeper understanding into the underlying causes of the condition. Understanding the uniqueness of a patient's condition through a detailed pulse, tongue and abdominal diagnosis, including the "Ten Questions", are key to formulating an effective treatment. If you have received Acupuncture in the past without the above diagnostic methods you only received a symptomatic or branch treatment and as such may not have achieved full benefit! Root treatments are first applied to balance the whole person, followed by a branch treatment to address a specific complaint. The belief is that by always applying treatment to the entire person (root) first, any symptom (branch) will likely be alleviated and not return. If the branch (symptoms) is only treated, the patient may feel some relief but the effects are often limited. Receiving a Japanese "Root and Branch" treatment gives the patient the deepest and most effective "core" treatment available.

Child Friendly and Pediatric Treatments

Children commonly complain of fever, infection, respiratory, digestive, urinary and emotional or behavioral disorders. Shoni-shin (Pediatric Acupuncture) involves the use of various non-needle or "blunt" tools (Teishin and Zanshin) that gently contacts, but do not break the skin, in order to stimulate healing in infants and young children. It's a non-invasive modality that you'll find effective in the treatment of many childhood conditions.

In summary, Japanese Acupuncture is unique in its efficiency and precision. Techniques are directed at using the minimal amount of stimulation to attain the greatest results with the patients' comfort always being paramount. Treatments are sensitive enough for children, the elderly and chronically ill, but also potent and effective for athletes and those with strong constitutions. Japanese Acupuncture is a powerful therapeutic system for both treating disease and maintaining health.