Acupuncture

Getting To The Point

Eisenhower's Deidre Braun gives a patient an acupuncture treatment.

Acupuncture is one of the oldest, most commonly used medical procedures in the world. Originating in China more than 2,000 years ago, it is becoming increasingly popular in the United States. A recent survey by the National Institutes of Health found that more than three million Americans used acupuncture in the past year.

Acupuncture involves the insertion of ultra-fine flexible needles into specific points on the skin. Because the needles are so fine, insertion of them is virtually painless.

Acupuncture has a number of applications, but one of its most common uses is for the treatment or prevention of pain, including back and neck pain, and post-operative pain. In fact, seventy percent of the Americans using acupuncture use it for the treatment of pain. Back pain was the most common pain treated, followed by joint pain, neck pain, severe headache/migraine, and recurring pain.

How does acupuncture work? Placing needles into specific points in the body triggers the release of neurotransmitters —chemicals that carry messages in the nervous system — and stimulates nerve pathways important to pain control and health. These neurotransmitters are cortisol, endorphin, serotonin, dopamine, epinephrine, and norepinephrine. Acupuncture treatments may last from 20 to 30 minutes, and patients describe the sessions as pleasant and relaxing.

Acupuncture is available at Eisenhower Medical Center. Eisenhower's Deidre Braun, MS, LAc, is a fellowship-trained Licensed Acupuncturist and Herbalist. "Acupuncture can provide effective treatment and pain relief for a variety of spinal conditions, including arthritis, back and neck pain, joint pain, sports injuries, headaches, and many other disorders," says Braun.

Traditional Chinese Medicine views the body as an intricate system of organs connected by pathways known as meridians. "According to the Chinese, good health depends on the smooth flow of energy, or Qi [pronounced "chee"], through these meridians," explains Braun. "When the flow of Qi is blocked or disrupted, pain and illness can result. Acupuncture restores the flow of Qi along the meridians."

According to Braun, acupuncture can be very effective in relieving spinal pain, whether it is cervical (neck), thoracic (upper back) or lumbar (lower back) pain. Almost anyone who suffers from spinal pain can be a candidate for acupuncture, although Braun cautions that it won't help for conditions that require surgery.

Treatment protocols vary from patient to patient, but four to eight treatments are a common protocol. "Pain relief can be gradual or dramatic with acupuncture treatments," says Braun. "You may not see relief until after several treatments, especially if you have had pain for years. But you should see some change, even if it's small, after four to six treatments. Any change at all in how you feel, even if it's relief from pain for only a few hours, means we are on the right track.

For more information about acupuncture, contact Deidre Braun at 760-766-1212.

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