

## HEALTH

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## TCM

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## Power points

Although many people are familiar with acupuncture, it's useful to understand its roots in traditional Chinese medicine – although this won't shed light on how it works.

According to ancient Chinese medical theory, the life force, or *chi*, flows through the body via invisible channels called meridians, which were mapped by Chinese medicine practitioners over the centuries.

The meridians and the corresponding acupoints along them act like a valve system that allows *chi* to flow from one organ to another. There are 12 main meridians and these run along pathways that correspond with particular organs.

In classic Chinese medicine a balance of *chi* is necessary to experience good health and overall wellbeing. Meridians can become blocked when the flow of *chi* is impeded by poor diet,

bad posture or an unhealthy lifestyle. A prolonged blockage is said to cause disease and pain.

The acupuncturist finds out whether there's an excess or deficiency of *chi* flow in certain meridians, and then fine-tunes these valves, or acupoints, mostly by applying thin, strong needles to acupoints.

The patient may experience a tingling sensation, numbness, warmth, heaviness or soreness. These sensations are said to be indicators of *chi* flow being stimulated.

How acupuncture works is a mystery, but research suggests

that it may stimulate or depress some functions of the nervous system. For example, it's been shown to stimulate the release of endorphin, a natural pain-killer, and make the pituitary and adrenal glands release anti-inflammatory chemicals, making it useful for pain relief.

Studies have shown that acupuncture may be useful in treating osteoarthritis, joint pain, tendonitis, asthma, migraines, post-operative and chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, depression, stroke rehabilitation, infertility and menstrual problems.

People also seek help for problems such as strokes, muscular-skeletal disorders, migraines, dizziness, insomnia and facial palsy.

Some precautions should be noted. It may not be suitable for those with high blood pressure or a resting heart rate over 100. In addition, it's not recommended for those with blood clotting disorders or severe heart, mental and diabetic conditions.

*Consult your physician or TCM practitioner before taking any medicine*