

# HEALTH

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## TCM

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### Acupuncture

In traditional Chinese medicine, the meridian system is a network of channels and pathways for transporting and carrying *chi* and blood through the body.

*Chi* is the vital life energy in the body, while blood flows around blood vessels, providing nutrition. Both *chi* and blood and body fluids are all important in promoting life activities in the body.

The meridian system looks like a channel web, linking different areas of the body. Its pathways make up a complex body map that supplies vital energy to every part of the body. Philosophically, the meridian system explains how we live, and why we become sick.

Meridians aren't blood vessels. They're invisible channels located at the external and superficial regions, which are able to affect the internal functions of our body.

Along the meridians, there are certain points where the *chi* and blood are concentrated on the body's exterior. These points are known as acupuncture points.

When we get sick, the harmony of our organs is upset. The organ disharmony affects the *chi* and blood flow in the acupuncture points of the corresponding meridians.

Disease or body disharmony

can be treated by stimulating acupuncture points that are linked to the area of disharmony. In this way, *chi* and blood can be regulated.

But how does acupuncture in the meridian system work? The following water-flow analogy may help explain the concept.

When water flows down a mountain or a slope, it flows from high to low ground. It also follows geographical terrain and collects in the most stable area, which is a river.

By avoiding turbulent flow, it provides the most efficient way of transporting water downstream. As a result, the land surrounding the river is lush with vegetation and life because of the steady supply of fresh water.

*Chi* works in a similar way to the flow of water. By flowing from high to low, it follows the body's landscape and gathers in a meridian.

Meridians, therefore, provide a natural pathway for the flow of *chi* and supply a constant source of energy to different parts of the body in the same way a river supplies water to its surrounding banks. If a river is blocked, all areas relying on the water downstream will be affected.

Similarly, if the meridian system is blocked, the supply of *chi* to different parts of the body will be interrupted, leading to organ disharmony and disease, even if the affected area is far away from the original blockage.

In order to restore balance and harmony, it's necessary to resume the optimal flow of the river or *chi*. In the case of a river, the debris causing the blockage

is removed and the riverbed is then strengthened.

The harmony of the meridian system is restored in our bodies by stimulating acupuncture points. In this way, the flow of *chi* is regulated, and *chi* energy is distributed efficiently throughout the body again. This is how acupuncture is used in the treatment of disease.

For example, a headache can be treated via the depression on the back of the hand between the first and second metacarpal bones, at the level of the middle of the second metacarpal bone.

*Rose Tse and Angela Collingwood are editors for Shen-Nong, a subsidiary of Integrated Chinese Medicine. Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or general practitioner*