

What Is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture improves the body's functions and promotes the natural self-healing process by stimulating specific anatomic sites--commonly referred to as acupuncture points, or acupoints. The most common method used to stimulate acupoints is the insertion of fine, sterile needles into the skin.⁶⁵⁷⁷⁶

East Asian Medicine has made a dramatic and unlikely migration. No longer confined to locations such as Shanghai, Seoul, or Singapore, it has become a vibrant component of health care from Sydney to Seattle to Stockholm. Chinese Medicine is now international.

Acupuncture seeks to release the flow of the body's vital energy or "Qi" by stimulating points along 14 energy pathways. Scientists say the needles cause the body to release endorphins -- natural painkillers and may boost blood flow and change brain activity.

Many studies in animals and humans have demonstrated that acupuncture can cause multiple biological responses. These responses can occur locally, i.e., at or close to the site of application, or at a distance, mediated mainly by sensory neurons to many structures within the central nervous system. This can lead to activation of pathways affecting various physiological systems in the brain as well as in the periphery. A focus of attention has been the role of endogenous opioids in acupuncture analgesia. Considerable evidence supports the claim that opioid peptides are released during acupuncture and that the analgesic effects of acupuncture are at least partially explained by their actions. That opioid antagonists such as naloxone reverse the analgesic effects of acupuncture further strengthens this hypothesis. Stimulation by acupuncture may also activate the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland, resulting in a broad spectrum of systemic effects. Alteration in the secretion of neurotransmitters and neurohormones and changes in the regulation of blood.

REFERENCE:

National Institutes of Health

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