What’s the point of acupuncture and acupressure? [1]

Alice,

What do you know about the medical uses of acupuncture and acupressure? Has either of these practices been helpful in treating any medical conditions? Thank you for any information you can provide me.

?Pondering pins and points

Answer

Dear Pondering pins and points,

Western health care or allopathic medicine practitioners, who have been studying acupuncture and acupressure for about thirty years, have not been able to explain exactly why they work, but many report benefits. Acupuncture and acupressure have been shown to relieve chronic pain associated with conditions such as arthritis, migraines, and menstrual cramps. Acupuncture is also being studied as a possible treatment for alcohol and other drug addiction, and to relieve pain in dental surgery.

Both acupuncture and acupressure have their origins in traditional Chinese medicine. They were developed thousands of years ago as a way of channeling and balancing a person’s life force. An imbalance of life force is believed to cause illness in both the mind and body.

There’s a pointed difference between acupuncture and acupressure. In acupuncture, a hair-like needle is inserted into specific areas in the body. The area can then be stimulated by twirling the needle or attaching it to a mild electrical current. In acupressure, the same areas are stimulated and energy is redirected through the use of pressure applied with the fingers or small seeds or metal balls.
When selecting an acupuncturist (or any health care provider, for that matter), choose carefully. It’s possible to get infections, or even hepatitis and HIV, from improperly cleaned needles that are reused. As a result, disposable acupuncture needles are now widely used. Most states require that acupuncturists be licensed. The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine [2] can provide you with a list of certified practitioners in your area. You can also check out the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) [3] at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to learn more about acupuncture, acupressure, and other forms of alternative medicine.

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