

# Acupuncture *Almanac*



*...the ABCs of  
Acupuncture*

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the ABCs of Acupuncture

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## Introduction

The origin of acupuncture can be traced back to ancient China. This practice is said to have originated around five thousand years back.

Chinese believe that a living body has two forces which are opposing each other all the time. These are the Yin and Yang. The passive, slow and cold in the body is known as the Yin and the hot, active and excited is known as the Yang.

Energy which gets blocked in the body causing diseases, aches and pains is called the “Chi”. This blocked energy is released using acupuncture. According to the Chinese the energy lines pass through the twelve meridians of the body which are invisible.

All organs of the body are governed by one of these meridians. By carrying out the acupuncture procedure on that particular meridian, the disease associated with that point is cured.

## History of Acupuncture

The earliest knowledge of the existence of acupuncture is found during the Sui dynasty which existed between AD 561 to 618. During this time, the Imperial Medical College which is one of the earliest medical colleges of China was established.

Evidence shows that acupuncture and moxibustion was the basis of the curriculum. Herbal medicine was also part of the syllabus. The Imperial Medical College which was actually started to conduct researches and train doctors thus records the first mention of the practice of acupuncture.

Acupuncture is also mentioned and discussed in one of the most ancient Chinese Medical Text called the “Huang Di Nei Jing” which was in existence more than two thousand years ago.

With Asia becoming developed and a general improvement in transportation and communication, acupuncture as a part of Chinese Medicine spread in the 6<sup>th</sup> century to Japan.

With the advent of Buddhism, religious medicine became popular and acupuncture became a popular healing method.

The insertion method which is used by acupuncture practitioners all over the world, especially in Japan was first invented by Waichi Sugiyama in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. This insertion tube is small and cylindrical and the needle is inserted through this.

The practice of acupuncture was very predominant in Japan even until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. An acupuncturist was equal to the modern doctor and acupuncture was the primary health care procedure followed.

With the introduction of the Dutch and German medicine in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Western methods of treatment started gaining popularity and acupuncture had to take a back seat.

After having decreased in practice for a few decades, acupuncture is again gaining popularity as an effective alternate healing procedure. There are various institutes training efficient acupuncturists in the art of healing through Acupuncture.

Acupuncture today is used alongside modern medicine in a lot of health care systems all over the world. In America, especially North America, acupuncture has gained prominence as an effective pain management therapy in hospitals and health care clinics.

In fact, the acupuncture needles have been declared as safe and effective medical instruments by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the year 1995. Medical schools have started incorporating acupuncture training as a part of their curriculum.

## Theories related to Ancient Acupuncture -

Unlike other practices, the practice and method of acupuncture has been mostly retained from what it was in the ancient times even though we have understood the procedure and its implications itself with practice over a period of time.

The principle of Accupuncture revolves around the circulation of vital energy in our body. This energy is called qi. In the acupuncture text Huangdi Neijing (Yellow Emperor's Classic on Internal Medicine), acupuncture is described as a procedure by which the excess qi is released from the body.

This is done by making holes in the energy pathways or meridians also called the Jingluo. This procedure was is so delicate that for some ailments, the qi had to be released carefully without letting out the blood and for some other ailments, the blood had to be let out without disturbing the qi.

This procedure is based on the assumption that diseases enter the living body through the outer skin and penetrates upto the bone marrow through the muscles and the various internal organs. The disease is cured by inserting the needle to the required depth. The depth of insertion is determined based on the degree of the disease penetration.

Before the invention of the microscopes and autopsy procedures which has revealed the working process of the human body, doctors and eminent scholars worked on the basis of the similarities that exist between the human body and the nature outside.

Ancient Chinese Civilization regarded the water courses as a major supporting entity for the human race. The water entity included the rivers, oceans, streams, canals, man made irrigation systems, etc.

Similar to this water system in nature, the human body has a system which consists of moving fluid which is also life giving. This fluid is referred to as the qi and the various paths followed by this fluid are the meridians.

The principle of acupuncture is based on the fact that just as in nature, where the water flow sometimes gets blocked by a fallen tree or a mud slide, the qi in the meridians in the human body too could get blocked due to various factors like disease due to bad weather, intake of improper food, etc.

When this happens, the point upto the blockage has a flow of the qi and beyond the blockage the qi dries up causing aches, pains and diseases.

Just like the water starts flowing immediately after you clear the obstruction, the block in the meridian can also be cleared to enable the fluid to flow freely and restore the natural flow.

When the water system gets blocked you can clear the blockage by making a small opening. The force of the water will push through the opening widening it enough to restore a natural flow.

Similarly, in the meridian blockages, making a small hole with a needle enables the qi to push through the hole and widen it making the flow easier and free. Meridian points in the body has certain points on which using the needle is more effective.

This is the system of approach which is being taught even today to the students opting for traditional acupuncture. All they need to do is to locate the area of disturbance, identify and isolate the points which are blocked and clear the blockage.

Procedures have become more sophisticated with different ways of needling being introduced, based on the depth and direction and even the chemical composition of the needles being used such as gold, silver or steel.

Even the purpose of using the needle differs with different patients. For some, needles are used just to increase the flow of qi in the meridian even if there is no blockage. For some others they may use the needle to decrease the flow of qi depending on what the case may be.

When the qi flow is corrected and balanced, the ailment or disease can be totally eradicated with a controlled diet, exercise and other habits over a period of time.