

# How much acupuncture will I need? (Or, What to Expect and When to Expect It)

Millions of people all over the world have benefited from acupuncture, which has been shown to relieve pain, promote healing and address a very broad list of health problems. We're so glad you'd like to be one of them! For most people, getting any of these benefits requires a commitment. You can't really make that commitment unless you know what to expect.

**There are two major factors that determine how much acupuncture you will need in order to treat particular conditions. The first is the length of time that you have been experiencing the condition, and the second is the severity of the condition. In other words, the longer and more severe the problem is, the longer it will take to correct.**

In treating an acute condition (such as a sprained ankle or sudden, severe back pain), treatments are spaced apart by how much relief is achieved and how long the results of the treatment last for. The more severe the condition, the more often you'll need to be treated. For example, if you have sudden back pain that is so severe that you can hardly walk, we'd start by asking you to come for three days in a row. If the pain were lowered so you could walk comfortably but after two days it began to come back, we'd ask you to come in right away for another treatment to help make the pain go away and stay away. As relief is achieved, we would transition to less frequent visits, concluding when the condition is fully resolved. While acute conditions often change dramatically in just two or three treatments, every case, like every person, is unique. We will evaluate your individual situation during your first visit, and then make adjustments as we both see how things change.

When using acupuncture to change a chronic condition (i.e. reduce the need for asthma medication, reduce high blood pressure, improve problems with the menstrual cycle, hypothyroidism, impaired immune function, etc.) treatment one to three times a week works best. In addition, to get a good kick-start to progress we often recommend coming two to three times a week for the first two or three weeks and then cutting back to once or twice a week for several weeks, all the while checking in with you on your changes. It is not unusual to continue acupuncture at this frequency for two to four months. Again, your treatment plan is based on the duration and severity of your condition; a longer duration requires a longer course and a greater severity requires greater frequency. As you begin to heal we would reduce the frequency of the treatments accordingly.

**Acupuncture as a self-care modality and preventive medicine:** besides having the capacity to heal and treat specific complaints, acupuncture can have a profound effect in relaxing and restoring the body and mind, improving overall health and preventing illness. It is nourishing for the body, the way wholesome food, working out and getting plenty of sleep is nourishing. It has the capacity to put you more in touch with your body and mind in a way that helps you to make healthy choices that enhance your well-being. When used for the purpose of health maintenance, most people benefit from having acupuncture once or twice a month as they see fit. If the stresses and challenges you're facing are greater than usual, frequency of treatments can be increased until these factors in your life change. This would be a preventative treatment strategy: nourishing, relaxing and restoring the body and mind with acupuncture with the goal of preventing illness.

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