

# San Diego Center for Health

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## Preparing For Your Acupuncture Appointment

### 🕒 Prior to Your First Visit

Spend some time thinking about what you would like to achieve from your acupuncture treatment. What are your expectations? What questions or concerns do you have about acupuncture? Jot down a few notes to bring with you to your first visit. The more openly we can communicate, the better I can help you.

Be realistic. If you have several conditions or symptoms you would like to address, please rank them. On your first visit, I will ask you primarily about your chief complaint. Secondary issues will also be noted and addressed as treatment progresses.

Start noticing how you feel each day and make a few notes. With respect to your chief complaint, try to answer these questions:

- When did this condition first appear? Is this a new condition or a recurring illness?
- What brought it on? What triggers it?
- Is your condition getting worse?
- To what degree does it interfere with your daily routine, work or sleep?
- What aggravates it? What provides relief?
- What time of day does it bother you the most? The least?

Be as descriptive and specific as possible. For example, "pain" and "discomfort" are very general words. Chinese medicine recognizes subtle distinctions in different types of pain. Burning pain is not the same as pain that has a stabbing sensation. Listed below are some words you might use to distinguish your particular pain.

- Sharp
- Dull and achy
- Constant
- Burning
- Contracting/Tight
- Heavy

- Radiating (from where?)
- Intermittent
- Stabbing
- Distending
- Numb
- Pins & needles
- No feeling
- Wandering
- Pounding

If none of these descriptive words are appropriate, try coming up with your own. If you are having difficulty describing your pain in words, try visualizing it or drawing a picture, and then describe what you see.

## 🕒 On the Day of Your Appointment

The following suggestions are provided to help you have a safe and relaxing experience with acupuncture. In order to reduce the risk of side effects, I require my clients to adhere to certain precautions. Please read this section carefully. If you have any questions, please contact me prior to your first visit.

If you are a new acupuncture patient, please arrive 15 minutes early to fill out the necessary paperwork.

Bring your notes and a list of current medications.

Eat a light meal 2 hours prior to your visit.

Acupuncture is not performed on individuals who are fasting. Being over-hungry increases the risk of nausea or dizziness. At the same time, please do not overeat or eat any foods that cause your stomach to be upset (for example, rich, greasy, fried, or extremely spicy foods).

Avoid alcohol on the day of your treatment. Acupuncture is not performed on intoxicated individuals due to the increased risk of shock. It is also not advisable to become intoxicated shortly after treatment.

Avoid heavy exertion immediately before and after treatment (i.e. within 2 hours).

Set aside enough time so that you are not rushing to and from your visit. Physical strain immediately before or after acupuncture can weaken your body. Please schedule your activities on the day of your visit accordingly (for example, do not schedule your appointment for an hour before your 2 hour kickboxing class).

Wear loose, comfortable clothing that can be rolled up to your elbows or knees.

Acupuncture points are located all over the body. Many of the acupuncture points that are commonly used are located between the wrists and elbows, ankles and knees and on the abdomen and back. You will be more comfortable if your clothing can be easily rolled up to your elbows and knees. Women should not wear one-piece dresses. If necessary, a gown can be provided.

☺ Will I Have Any Side Effects to the Treatment?

Although side effects are uncommon, the following have been known to occur: Feelings of light-headedness (especially when arising from the treatment table too rapidly), dizziness, sleepiness, euphoria, slight nausea and residual muscle aches. Sometimes a slight bruise may appear at one or more of the acupuncture points treated which usually disappears within a few days. If cupping therapy has been administered, slight bruising may also occur at the site. If moxa herb is burned on top of a protective cream directly applied to the skin, some redness may occur afterward. Staying properly hydrated and warm after each treatment is recommended.

☺ What Are Flare-ups?

In some cases, especially those involving muscular injury, pain, and/or nerve involvement (i.e. sciatica), a patient's individual symptoms may briefly appear to get worse shortly after a treatment. This is referred to as a "healing reaction" whereby the acupuncture needles have caused stagnant Qi and blood from the injured, inflamed area to begin to spread outward to cover a larger area. Consequently, the patient perceives that the pain feels worse because it has spread out over a larger area. This typically dissipates within 24 hours and is often a positive indication that the treatment is working and recovery may actually take place at a more rapid rate over subsequent treatments.

☺ Please feel free to contact the clinic should you have any questions or concerns prior to or following your acupuncture treatment.