

HOW TO MAKE ACUPUNCTURE WORK (Or, What to Expect and When to Expect It)

by Diana Di Gioia, L.Ac. 2006. Community Acupuncture Network

Millions of people all over the world have used acupuncture to relieve pain, promote healing, and address a very broad range of health problems. We're glad you'd like to be one of them! For most people, getting benefit from acupuncture requires a commitment. And you can't really make that commitment in an informed way unless you know what to expect.

There are several ways people benefit from acupuncture. One may be called THE BIG BANG. For some people, between 2 and 20 acupuncture treatments, spaced closely together, can have a MAJOR impact on a health problem. Often in BIG BANG cases, you'll see some of your symptoms abating within the first few treatments and you can graduate from treatment or just come in for an occasional tune-up once the problem is gone. If you have a recent onset problem (say, pain or fatigue or digestive upset of a few months duration) it's fairly likely you will be in this category. Some more chronic problems can also fall into this category, although it's difficult to predict which ones.

The other way acupuncture may work may be called DROPS OF WATER ON A STONE. In these cases, regular once or twice weekly acupuncture treatments are able very gradually to move the body back towards health. When acupuncture works in this way, people can see profound benefits from treatment, even for chronic problems. But these people require consistent acupuncture over much longer periods of time than BIG BANG responders. Think of acupuncture in these cases as providing the persistent health nourishment that the body needs to heal. You may come in once, or even twice weekly, and a year from now you will report that you have eliminated half your medication, or no longer need pain pills, or that your sleep and energy are back to normal.

There are also situations that fall somewhere in the middle. Some people will see a marked improvement in the first six to twelve treatments, followed by a plateau. If you are one of these people, it is likely that continuing regular acupuncture will offer more benefit. But, as in the DROPS OF WATER cases, further improvement can be very gradual, and may require lots of patience.

We can't know at the start exactly which symptoms can be resolved with acupuncture, and we can't know for sure if you're going to fall into the BIG BANG or DROPS OF WATER ON A STONE category or somewhere in the middle. We have a lot of experience seeing people in all these categories get many, many benefits from acupuncture. And if, at any time we don't think you're benefiting from acupuncture, or need to check out another approach, we'll tell you.

The best news is, while you are waiting to see exactly what health benefits acupuncture can offer you, the regular treatments reduce your stress level and relax your body, thus making all kinds of chronic diseases and problems far less likely and improving your overall quality of life.

Community Acupuncture is designed to make acupuncture treatment affordable and available so that people who respond in any of these ways can receive the acupuncture they need, as often and as long as they need it, to get the best results possible.