

Acupuncture

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET



What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is one component of traditional Chinese medicine that has been used for over 2,000 years to treat many health conditions. It is a method of inserting thin sterile needles into the body to promote natural healing and pain relief. Electrical stimulation may be used in some cases with the needles.

How does acupuncture work?

The main idea of acupuncture is that energy called Qi (pronounced "chee") flows through the body along pathways called meridians or channels. Pain results when the flow of Qi becomes blocked. Acupuncture helps the Qi flow more easily. Breathing, thinking, and exercising moves the Qi as well. Western research shows that it stimulates the nervous system to release natural substances (like endorphins) that reduce pain and may help change how the brain perceives the pain.

Who benefits from acupuncture?

At Kaiser Permanente, acupuncture is used only when it has been proven through clinical research to have benefit. These include neck, back, shoulder or knee pain, and nausea or vomiting during chemotherapy. Our acupuncturists only treat the condition for which you have been referred.

How do I know if acupuncture will work?

You and your acupuncturist will generally know within three treatments if acupuncture is helping. In Chinese medicine, acupuncture is not used alone. Other components of Chinese medicine involve looking at other things that may contribute to pain such as lifestyle habits, thoughts, and emotions.

Will acupuncture cure my pain?

Acupuncture may decrease pain temporarily but does not cure chronic pain. It is one way to reduce your pain while you learn other ways to manage it. Acupuncture is not a long-term treatment.

What can I do to make acupuncture more effective?

You can make acupuncture more effective by participating in skill-based pain management classes and making specific lifestyle changes such as getting regular physical activity, doing breathing exercises, practicing relaxation and stress management techniques, losing excess weight and looking at the positive aspects in your life. Please avoid strenuous activity after acupuncture treatments.

Is acupuncture safe?

Yes, acupuncture is safe because we use sterile, disposable needles. Possible risks from acupuncture include but are not limited to slight bleeding, bruising, swelling, skin infection, headache, and fainting. People may also experience a temporary increase of pain during and/or following the treatment. If electricity is used, only a very small amount of current is used, and it is very safe. You may feel a pulsating or mild tingling sensation during the electro-acupuncture treatment.

How do I receive acupuncture?

After your doctor sends a referral, an acupuncturist will review it to determine if treatment is appropriate. We will then contact you to schedule a mandatory orientation. You will then be scheduled for an initial trial offered only at the Rancho Cordova facility to North Valley members. If your acupuncturist determines additional treatments would be helpful, your treatments will be extended.

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No Acupuncture if:

- Your blood pressure is high, or you have untreated high blood pressure
- You have an active illness or infection (cold, flu, pneumonia, urinary infection, skin ulcer, wound infection, or sepsis, etc.)
- You are taking antibiotics

Acupuncture is okay:

- Any time before surgery
- Wait 6 weeks after major surgery
- Wait 2 weeks after steroid injection
- Wait until pregnancy is over, or at least after the first trimester, then have acupuncture treatment
- If seizure within last six months but stable now, please bring an adult companion with you

Please do not:

- Wear perfume or cologne or strong-smelling lotions
- Use cell phone during treatment. Please turn your cell phone off completely
- Bring guests or children to the appointment

Before treatment

- **Arrive 10 - 15 minutes early to register and use the restroom before checking in**
- Members under 18 years of age need a legal adult guardian at **each** appointment
- Eat a small meal
- Take all medications (even pain medications) as prescribed
- Wear comfortable clothes
- If treatment is planned for your neck or shoulder and you have long hair, please bring a hair tie

After treatment

- You will be able to drive yourself home
- Participate in light activity only, no strenuous exercising
- Continue to take your prescription medications
- Keep written notes of your response to treatment between appointments
- Do not drink alcohol on the day you have acupuncture

Enhance the benefits of your treatment with

- North Valley Chronic Pain Program: Essential Skills for Pain Management
- Daily stretching
- Tai Chi or Qi Gong
- Meditation and relaxation
- Healthy lifestyle choices

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used. Herbs and supplements are sold over-the-counter. Kaiser Permanente carries only herb categories for which some evidence exists to show that the herbs may be effective to treat certain medical conditions.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Will acupuncture cure my pain?

Acupuncture may decrease pain temporarily but does not cure chronic pain. It is not a long-term, maintenance treatment.

What else can I do to manage my pain?

Talk with your Doctor or acupuncturist. They may recommend skill-based classes, specific lifestyle changes, acupressure, or other resources. Acupuncture is more effective when used with other pain management strategies.

How will my appointments be scheduled, and how many treatments will I receive?

After you are referred by your doctor, we will call you to schedule an appointment. We will monitor your response and then discuss our treatment plan with you. The plan will include how often and how many appointments are needed for your condition.

How long are the appointments?

Allow one hour for your entire appointment. Please arrive 10-15 minutes before your appointment to check in and register.

Where and when is Acupuncture offered?

Acupuncture is provided by the Comprehensive Pain Management Department at the Rancho Cordova Kaiser Permanente facility. Appointments are Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

How much does it cost?

Your copay depends on your coverage. Please call Member Services 1-800-464-4000 for information.

Should I come for treatment if I'm not having pain on the day of my appointment?

Yes, please keep your appointment, and discuss your condition with your Acupuncturist.

Does it hurt?

Acupuncture needles are very thin, close to the thickness of a human hair. Most people feel no pain.

Is there medicine in the needles?

No, the needles are simply sterile stainless steel.

Where will the needles be placed?

Needles are typically placed in the areas where your pain is located but may also be placed in a completely different area of your body.

Will treatment on one part of my body help pain in other areas, too?

Acupuncture is a holistic treatment that may help pain in more than one area of the body at the same time.

How are Acupuncturists trained?

Acupuncturists are licensed by the State of California Acupuncture Board and undergo rigorous training, including thousands of hours of graduate-level education and clinical training. They are highly skilled healthcare providers.

Please talk with your Acupuncturist at your first visit if you have additional questions.

Essential Skills for Pain Management

For members with Chronic Pain lasting longer than six months



Is this program right for you?

Chronic pain can affect everything in life, including your ability to work and have fun, your sleep, your relationships, and your feelings of well-being.

Essential Skills for Pain Management is a 12-month program to help you develop the skills to improve your quality of life.

What can you expect from this program?

This program starts with four interactive workshops called *Essential Skills for Pain Management*. We offer the newest evidence-based skills to decrease pain and suffering. Each week you will learn a new pain-lowering skill and a mindful movement skill. Your weekly home-practice is the key to retraining your nervous system to decrease pain.

Workshops topics

- Where pain comes from and why you still hurt
- Thought and emotion management
- How to improve your sleep
- Proven pain-lowering skills
- How to use your body more effectively
- How to move and exercise within your limitations
- Breathing skills to support pain control

Workshops

Are 2 1/2 hours, once a week for four weeks in a row, followed by the recommended Essential Skills Practice sessions. Pain Psychologists and Pain Physical Therapists facilitate each workshop.

Your Care Team

Includes a Pain Psychologist and a Pain Physical Therapist. Their goal is to support your home-practice of the new pain-lowering skills.

How can you participate in the program?

1. Ask your Physician to refer you to the program
2. We will then call you to schedule the workshops offered at various times and North Valley locations
3. Once you complete the workshops, we encourage you to attend the Essential Skills Practice sessions to continue working on your new pain-lowering skills
4. You may contact your Nurse Care Manager for the remainder of the 12 months with questions or concerns about your pain experience or home-practice

Fee

No fee. Offered to Kaiser Permanente members only

**For further information,
please call the
Comprehensive Pain
Management Department:
916-631-2533**

Kaiser Permanente Classes and Resources



Acupuncture 916-631-2433

Mental and Behavioral Health 916-973-5300

- Improving Your Sleep class
- Mind-Body Health class
- Mindfulness Meditation class
- Relaxation class
- Stress Management overview

Health Education

- Basic Nutrition class 916-474-6269
- Healthy Weight class 916-474-6248

Wellness Coaching by Phone 1-866-251-4514

- Physical Activity
- Quit Tobacco
- Stress Management
- Weight Management

Ask Your Doctor for a Referral

- Chronic Pain Program
- Physical Therapy