How to Take Care of Yourself

after an acupuncture appointment

01 Rest.

Resting allows the physical and emotional restoration that acupuncture sets in motion to continue.

02 Go light on exercise.

Exercise is fine—light, gradual movement can be a nice adjunct to an acupuncture treatment—but be gentle.

03 Use heat.

Acupuncturists are typically not proponents of using ice, unless its within 24 hours of an acute injury. Chronic pain, or conditions such as muscle soreness, stiffness, arthritis and reoccurring injuries, all call for heat therapy. Unlike cold therapy's ability to constrict blood vessels, heat allows for our blood vessels to expand, and our muscles to relax. A soothing effect occurs because heat also stimulates circulation and increases tissue elasticity, providing pain relief.

04 Stay Hydrated.

It's important to stay hydrated after acupuncture because it can cause toxins to be released into your system. Staying appropriately hydrated helps flush out these toxins.

05 Avoid alcohol and coffee.

Since alcohol and coffee both cause dehydrating effects on the body, they should be avoided after acupuncture.

06 Eat well.

When it comes to inflammation, a known cause for pain and a myriad of other diseases, it's true that you are what you eat. Many foods have been shown to reduce inflammation, as well as to increase it. Avoid sugary, processed, and poor-quality foods. Think about food as sustenance, and eating as an opportunity to continue healing your body after acupuncture.

07 Turn off the TV.

Acupuncture helps bring you into balance, where your sympathetic nervous system (fight-or-flight response) is no longer in overdrive. Enjoy a respite from the overstimulating world in which we live.

08 Pay attention.

Pay special attention to how you feel in the days following a treatment, your acupuncturist will want to know of any sensations or changes that you may have noticed at your next visit. Information you provide informs and directs your course of acupuncture care; the more information your acupuncturist has, the better.

A note about side effects:

The most common side effects of acupuncture are things everyone wants: better sleep, more energy, mental clarity, improved digestion, and less stress. Occasionally, there are other, less pleasant side effects of acupuncture. These additional side effects are much more rare, but they can and do happen. None are life-threatening and all typically are fleeting. Still, they are good to be aware of so that if you do experience them, you know they're normal and nothing to be too concerned about. Infrequent but possible side effects of acupuncture include: soreness, fatigue, feeling more emotional or teary, bruising, lightheadedness, muscle twitching, or a temporary worsening of symptoms. As your body starts undergoing the changes involved in moving toward health, things get stirred up. The good news about these side effects is that it's a sign that things are moving and that your body is responding to acupuncture. While these side effects are rarely cause for concern, you know your body best. If any of the above side effects feel like they're too severe or lasting too long—or if you notice any additional negative reactions to an acupuncture treatment—you should contact your acupuncturist.

8 Things to Remember

before an acupuncture appointment

Acupuncture isn't really about hard-and-fast rules. What works for one person may not necessarily work for another. This is the beauty of acupuncture—it meets us wherever we're at- however, there are some general rules of thumb when it comes to preparing for an acupuncture appointment. These guidelines tend to improve the treatment experience and outcome for most people.

01 Schedule wisely.

Avoid scheduling acupuncture before or after something really strenuous or stressful.

02 Eat.

Do not go for acupuncture on an empty stomach. It can leave you feeling lightheaded or physically depleted. A good guideline is to eat about two hours before an acupuncture appointment.

03 Avoid coffee.

Coffee is a stimulant which triggers the release of certain neurotransmitters that can kick your body into fight-or-flight mode. Acupuncture works to shift you away from that sympathetic (fight-or-flight) state and toward a parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) one, so coffee inhibits the process.
Try to avoid coffee for at least 2 hours before your appointment.

04 Avoid alcohol.

One goal of acupuncture is to bring more awareness to how we feel. Impairing the senses with alcohol is not helpful.

05 Wear loose clothing.

Loose clothing makes it easier for your practitioner to access acupoints and makes you more comfortable as you rest during your visit.

06 Don't rush.

Arriving at your appointment amped-up is counter productive. It's similar to how coffee works against the process of calming the nervous system. Shoot to arrive 10-15 minutes early for your appointment.

07 Unplug.

Please turn off your phone. This is your time and no one else's. Make it count.

08 Pay attention.

Make note of any symptoms or sensations you've experienced in the past or currently. We tend to forget these things, ignore them, or assume they're irrelevant, but from an acupuncture perspective they help contribute to your overall picture of health.Your acupuncturist will want to hear about them!