

# QUESTIONS PATIENTS ASK



## SHOULD I COMBINE ACUPUNCTURE WITH OTHER TREATMENTS?

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**I'm already working with a physician [or psychotherapist] about my problem. I'm concerned with not having professionals work at cross-purposes.**

Quite right. If this is a concern of yours, talk with your acupuncturist about contacting your doctor. Acupuncturists often collaborate with physicians and therapists, supporting the treatments the patient is getting from other professionals. I like to know my patients are getting all available support.

Physicians and therapists have referred many of my patients, who have discovered that the process of healing is enhanced and can happen more quickly with acupuncture.

**My doctor has referred me to specialists. They recommended surgery [chemotherapy, medications, physical therapy, etc.]. Will acupuncture be useful, too?** Talk with an acupuncturist. Depending on your unique concern, acupuncture treatments could help prepare you for the trauma of surgery or

could help you avoid or forestall it.

Sometimes, surgery is the best alternative, and should be pursued without question. Acupuncture can then be used to adjust the underlying problem that led to surgery in the first place, for unless the underlying problem is corrected, surgery may be needed again.

For cancer, discussions with your oncologist can lead you to the best choice of action within Western medicine, including chemotherapy, surgery, or radiation. There is no reason that you cannot *add* acupuncture to your other treatments.

Acupuncture is recognized for pain control, limiting the

side effects of chemotherapy and radiation, and for helping bolster the courage one needs to go through the ordeal of life-threatening illness. Many specialists recommend acupuncture to support patients in both chronic and acute conditions.

### **How will I know that acupuncture is working?**

When I was a child, I remember asking my mother how I'd know if I were in love. She told me, "Don't worry, you'll know."

It's the same with acupuncture. Your acupuncturist will take a detailed history, and it's at that point you may begin to note some details of

how your own body works. After the first treatment you might notice changes that are very subtle (or not so subtle!). By the sixth or seventh treatment, you should be able to notice some very distinct changes and improvements in how you feel, some of which you might not even have expected.

A patient of mine felt no sensation in her breast since a tumor was removed about ten years previously. When she began treatment, she began to have breast tenderness. She was actually irritated until she realized that the soreness signaled a return to feeling that she had not experienced for over ten years!

Remember, though, that acupuncture is a natural form of healing and is, therefore, slower and more gentle than drugs or surgery. A compensation for the slowness, if you need one, is that there are no side effects.

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