

# QUESTIONS PATIENTS ASK



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## Timing treatments—by calendar *and* that “inner voice” Too busy to start acupuncture?

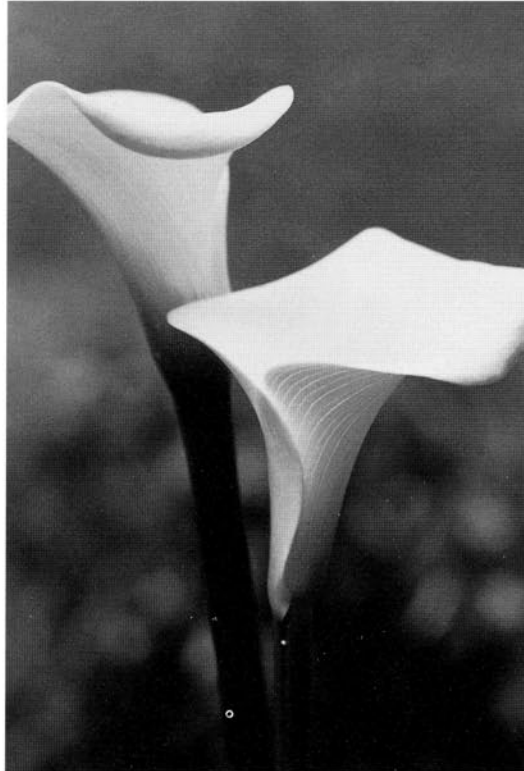
**I've been getting acupuncture treatments for about six months, and I'm feeling very well right now. My acupuncturist recommends that I return for a treatment every season. How will this help me?**

It's wonderful to hear that acupuncture has helped you with the concerns that you came in with. It is likely that your symptoms (in the body, mind or spirit) did not develop overnight, nor did they disappear overnight. Symptoms don't develop all at once. Even that well-known camel had a zillion straws on his back before his back gave out. Did he even notice just one more straw—then one *more* straw, one more, one more—before that one straw too many? Before your symptoms began to appear, chances are you too were unaware of all the “straws” you were carrying. Acupuncture, since its inception, has been used as a preventive tool, a way of lightening your load before that last straw. And that's how your practitioner envisions your seasonal treatments—as a way to help you maintain

your present good health.

Health is a *process* whereby you maintain the correct balance for yourself, and seasonal treatments are only part of the picture. Your own mindfulness is important on a daily basis. This might include watching your diet, continuing the right kinds of exercise, doing work that you love, getting enough sleep, paying attention to relationship needs, and getting spiritual support in a way that nurtures your life.

Our automobiles need oil changes, our gardens need fertilizing, our houses need painting. In the same way, you need tending—on a daily basis, as well as on a less frequent but regular schedule. If you are like most of humankind, you are not al-



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ways careful about your own tending, and things can energetically “slip” without your even noticing. (Remember that camel?) It is at those times that you may need an outside intervention, such as acupuncture, to keep you healthy over the long term. Thus your practitioner suggests that you have treatment on a regular basis so that you can live life to the fullest. Seasonal treatments are especially helpful because

you have different energetic needs in different seasons. In spring, for example, you need much more liveliness than in the quiet of winter.

Whether you receive treatment on a weekly, monthly or seasonal basis, it's important that you attend to what your body, mind and spirit are telling you. You may have discovered that you feel great during certain seasons, while at other times of the year you struggle either physically or emotionally. At those hard times you might benefit from more frequent treatment. For example, every spring and fall my azalea bushes tell me in no uncertain terms that it is time for a good feeding (leaves turn yellow and start to fall off). So while I make sure that my azaleas have enough water during all seasons, I'm especially attentive in the spring and fall. In the same way, you may find that you need more frequent tending during one or more seasons, and thus adjust your acupuncture treatment schedule.

I advise my patients to observe themselves closely. If you begin looking in your



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calendar to see when your next acupuncture treatment is scheduled, that little voice inside may be telling you it's time for a treatment whether it is on your regular schedule or not! It's important to schedule regular maintenance—*and* to attend to that inner voice.

**Eventually I want to try acupuncture, but a lot is going on in my life. I'm feeling I can't take on one more thing, and I'm wondering if I should wait to start treatment?**

That's a really good question. And I have a few good ques-

tions for you in return: How would it feel to be receiving support for yourself right now as you go through so much? Would just the right kind of support keep you from feeling overwhelmed? frustrated? frightened? depressed? What if you had someone in your corner who could be a partner for you as you travel on your life journey, AND (*here's the important part*) who also has the technical skills to keep these stresses from taking a heavy toll on your body, mind and spirit? An acupuncturist has the skill to help alleviate some of the physical and emotional impediments that can

keep you from doing your best.

I have a new client whose best friend referred her to acupuncture for some mild aches and pains about four years ago. She kept putting it off ("it was just one thing after another" she told me). Her symptoms grew much worse, and finally she called for an appointment. Now, after three treatments, her symptoms are nearly gone, and she feels so foolish that she didn't come for treatment four years ago!

Life's challenges shouldn't be so cumbersome as to keep you from doing what you can to tend yourself. Are you too busy to eat? Take a shower?

Have fun with your family or friends? Exercise? Sleep? If so, then maybe you should take a look at your priorities. Tending to any one of those things will help you meet the challenges in your life, and acupuncture has the same potential.

My last question: Why not invest a little time and energy in your own care?

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