

What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a very safe, gentle and effective complementary therapy. It works well in conjunction with conventional veterinary medicine and surgery, and can also bridge a gap between the two, where perhaps drugs have unwanted side effects, or surgery is not an option for some reason.



The Oxford dictionary definition of Acupuncture is as follows:

"A system of complimentary medicine in which fine needles are inserted in the skin at specific points along what are considered to be lines of energy (meridians), used in the treatment of various physical and mental conditions."

Acupuncture is one of the oldest methods of Chinese medicine, having been used successfully for many thousands of years on both people and animals. It is now widely used in the Western world, with much success at treating a variety of conditions.

How does Acupuncture work?



Acupuncture is now known to have a wide range of effects throughout the body. It is believed to work mainly through the central nervous system, and thus affects the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, nervous and hormonal systems.

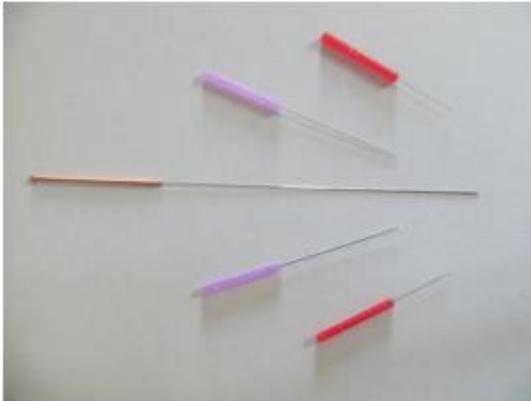
Stimulation of acupuncture points causes a release of neuro-transmitters and neuro-hormones- including some of the body's 'natural painkillers' such as endorphins. It also relieves muscle spasms, causes an increase in circulation, stimulates nerves, and stimulates the body's own defence system- plus it has many other wide-ranging effects, depending on the condition and the points being treated.

Is Acupuncture safe?

Acupuncture is a very safe, drug- and chemical-free therapy- it is incredibly rare for there to be any side effects.

Occasionally an animal's condition may become temporarily worse before it improves, but if this does occur it is usually within the first 24-48 hours following a treatment.

Does Acupuncture hurt?



An Acupuncture needle is very fine compared to a needle used for injections. Often the patient doesn't feel the needle pierce the skin at all, or there may be a brief pricking sensation if the area is particularly sensitive. Once the needles are in place, there is often a feeling of warmth and relaxation, and some animals even lie down and go to sleep.

Which conditions can Acupuncture be used to treat?



In small animals (dogs and cats) acupuncture is most often used for the following:

Musculoskeletal conditions

- e.g. -arthritis
- hip dysplasia
- back problems
- intervertebral disc disease
- pain relief and relief from muscle spasm
- long term injuries

It can also be very helpful in a variety of other conditions such as:

- nervous disorders
 - skin problems
 - gastrointestinal problems
 - respiratory problems
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How long does an Acupuncture treatment last?

Once the needles are in place, they can be left for any length of time up to 20 minutes - depending on the condition and the patient being treated.



How many treatments will my pet need?



Acupuncture therapy usually begins with one treatment a week for 4-6 weeks, then the frequency of treatment is tapered off depending on the animal's response. Sometimes no further treatments are required; sometimes monthly, two-monthly or even six-monthly repeats are needed to maintain the improvement.

Improvement in your pet's condition may be seen following the first treatment, but it is more usual for positive changes to start to be seen after 2, 3 or even 4 treatments.
