Does acupuncture hurt?

Acupuncture uses disposable, sterile, ultra-fine needles. These filiform needles are solid and do not have a cutting edge like hypodermic needles. Some people do not feel acupuncture needles go in at all; others are more sensitive and may feel a sensation or a pinch. Once needles are in, there should not be pain. If a needle remains uncomfortable, your acupuncturist will adjust it or take it out.

Is there medicine in the needles?

Not at all. What's great about acupuncture is that it is a physical treatment with no pharmaceuticals involved. The needles are sterile stainless steel and will not negatively interact with any medication you may be taking.

How does it work?

Needles stimulate specific points on acupuncture channels (also called meridians), which are orderly pathways that interact with networks of muscle, fascia, blood vessels and nerves. Qi (your vital energy) and blood flow through these channels and perfuse all of their levels: the skin, the muscles, and the organs and internal systems. Chinese medicine states that blockages and incorrect circulation through the channels causes pain and disease. Stimulation of acupuncture points can affect the area near the needle, or anywhere along the channel to correct the circulation.

Do I need to ask my doctor before receiving acupuncture?

Yes. At Roswell Park, once an order for acupuncture has been placed for you, your primary provider will be contacted for clearance.

My doctor told me I shouldn't have part of my body punctured or scratched. Can I still get acupuncture?

Your acupuncturist will always respect and follow any restriction that your physician places on your care. Your acupuncturist may also determine that certain areas should not be needled. If you have any restriction of needling near certain areas of the body, your acupuncturist will needle other areas instead. Because the acupuncture channel system works throughout the whole body, any location can be treated without direct needling. When treating lymphedema, for example, one of the most commonly used techniques is to needle the opposite limb.

How many times do I need to get acupuncture?

The number and a frequency of treatments depends on your condition and your health goals. When the goal is to relieve high stress or treat a symptom like chemo-induced nausea, results may be almost immediate. Some conditions, like peripheral neuropathy related to chemotherapy, may take 3-5 visits for patients to notice a change. While most people report some symptom relief at the first treatment, not everyone responds instantly, and following through with a course of acupuncture treatment tailored to your needs is the best strategy to achieve and maintain good results. A typical course of acupuncture treatment for long-term conditions is 10 visits, which begin weekly and shift to longer intervals depending on your progress. Additional courses of treatment may be recommended as needed.

I've had acupuncture before and it didn't do anything. Should I try it again?

There may be many reasons that you did not respond to acupuncture in the past. Your acupuncturist at Roswell is knowledgeable in different styles of treatment. We encourage you to discuss your previous experience with the acupuncturist to create a treatment plan that works best for you. Again, acupuncture is a therapy: following through with the recommended course of acupuncture treatment is the best strategy to achieve and maintain good results.

Does insurance cover acupuncture?

Some insurance plans cover acupuncture; call your insurance company directly to find out. At Roswell, acupuncture must be paid for at the time of visit. You may request a receipt that you can submit to your insurance for reimbursement. **There are also reduced rates for those who qualify** (see *Acupuncture Annual Income-Based Rates* in this **Acupuncture Info Packet**). Completed Financial Assistance applications (included in this packet) may be dropped off to the Cashier in the Main Hospital or mailed to the address on the application.