



Acupuncture and Acupressure

Seattle Children's is one of a few pediatric hospitals offering acupuncture to our patients. Acupuncture and other treatment methods, like acupressure, are provided by acupuncturists in our Pain Medicine program. These Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) therapies are offered along with Western medicine to care for our patients' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being.

Acupuncture on the inpatient units

- For patients staying at the hospital, acupuncture is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Your child's primary doctor or a healthcare team member must put in a consult order for your child to receive acupuncture. Talk to your provider or nurse if you are interested in acupuncture for your child.

Outpatient Pain Medicine Clinic

- Outpatient acupuncture appointments take place on Tuesdays from 1 to 5 p.m. and Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Your child can be referred for acupuncture by a member of their Seattle Children's inpatient primary team or through a provider in the Pain Medicine Clinic.
- If your child has not had acupuncture during an inpatient stay, the Pain Medicine Team may need to evaluate your child before your child receives acupuncture in our outpatient clinic.

What are acupuncture and acupressure?

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting very thin, hair-like needles at specific points on the body known as acupuncture points. Acupressure uses manual massage techniques at specific points on the body. These therapies stimulate the body to heal from illness, maintain health, and reduce pain and other symptoms.

How does acupuncture work?

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) states that our body is connected by a complex system of channels, or meridians, with over 365 acupuncture points. Illness is thought to be caused by an imbalance or improper flow of vital energy, called qi (pronounced chee), throughout the body. To restore balance and the flow of qi, specific acupuncture points are stimulated with needles or other treatment methods. Some of the other treatment methods may include acupressure, tuina, moxibustion, cupping, guasha, and electrostimulation.

Acupuncture relieves pain by stimulating nerves and the release of neurochemicals that block pain messages and affect the way these messages are interpreted by the body.

To Learn More

- Pain Medicine Clinic
206-987-1520
- Ask your child's
healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask
your child's nurse.
- From outside the
hospital, call the
toll-free Family
Interpreting Line
1-866-583-1527. Tell
the interpreter the
name or extension
you need.

What conditions can be treated by acupuncture?

Acupuncture is used to treat a wide range of medical problems in adults and children, including:

- Nausea and vomiting after surgery or chemotherapy
- Headache, neck pain, back pain, menstrual pain and muscle pain
- Pain after surgery or dental procedures
- Fibromyalgia and osteoarthritis
- Respiratory problems, including sinusitis, bronchitis, asthma, sore throat, frequent chest infections, hiccups
- Upset stomach (gastritis), ulcers, constipation, diarrhea, spastic colon, inflammatory bowel disease
- Peripheral neuropathy, stroke rehabilitation, problems sleeping
- Urinary and reproductive problems
- Addiction

What should I expect during my child's treatment?

Acupuncture and other treatments are provided in a gentle and safe manner. The needles are stainless steel, solid and very thin. They are different from the hollow needles with cutting edges, like the needles used to give a shot.

Your child will likely feel little to no discomfort when the needle is inserted. Some patients feel a dull or achy sensation where the needle is inserted. This response, called "de qi," is caused by stimulating the acupuncture point. It will go away when the treatment is over. Your child may feel relaxed and calm after the acupuncture treatment.

The number of treatments recommended for your child is based on their needs and the condition being treated.

Are there any side effects?

Side effects from acupuncture are rare. We use single-use, disposable, sterile needles; so, the risk of infection or spreading of germs is very low.

Will insurance cover acupuncture?

Many health insurance companies in Washington will cover the treatments, although not all do. For example, acupuncture is not covered by Tricare. Some insurance plans have limits on how many treatments are covered. Check with your child's insurance plan to make sure acupuncture is covered.