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LIFE SPIRIT



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# Life Spirit

CHALLENGE PROGRESS TOXIC DIRT IN THE HOME

Pathways to Body, Health & Harmony

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MAGAZINE



**Ingrid Mason**  
**Turning Panic**  
**into Power**

**Fighting the**  
**Winter Flu**

*... natural*  
*ways*  
*to cope*

**Kaz Cooke &**  
**Ruth Trickey**  
*find their*  
*natural answers*

*Aromatherapy*  
**NEEDLES & PINS**  
**FOR BETTER HEALTH**

**Scent of a man**  
**aromatherapy for men**





# If your choice is Acupuncture...

**To an acupuncturist, the body is a self-healing entity which works best when it is in balance.**

An acupuncturist will affect the flow of energy through a body by placing needles at special points along the energy pathways or meridians.

There are several main meridians and many others which a practitioner will access, depending on the patient's problem.

As living beings, we are all naturally filled with vitality and are continually, but unconsciously, being rebalanced and regenerated from within.

Most of the functions of the body are carried out unconsciously such as breathing, growing and the healing of wounds which don't need treatment.

A cold or flu may 'take its course', and we will be healed without a visit to the doctor or acupuncturist.

But if those energy lines are blocked by an injury or illness it may be necessary to visit the acupuncturist.

An acupuncturist will look at the *qi* or energy of the body before beginning any healing treatment.

*Qi* or *chi* can be difficult to define, but it can be translated as breath, life force, vitality, energy or simply that which keeps us alive. Without *qi* there is no life.

*Qi* flows along the meridians. The meridians are similar in some ways to the blood circulation and nervous system, but are invisible to the eye.

It can be sensed from its effects on people by a trained practitioner and has

been charted for more than 2000 years.

Putting needles in the points along the meridian will 'tap' the *qi* or affect it to influence the person's state of health.

An acupuncturist will always approach a patient from a holistic point of view. Acupuncture will draw together the diverse signs and symptoms of ill-health to form a basic pattern of disharmony.

This may include the mental and emotional state, as well as the physical symptoms, as these may be warning signs that there is an imbalance in the patient.

Many acupuncturists will see the physical problem as being a result of an imbalance or blockage of *qi*, blocked thoughts or beliefs, or spiritual imbalances.

Different acupuncturists will diagnose in different ways.

Always, the diagnosis and treatment will depend very much on the intention of the patient as well as the intention of the practitioner. The patient allows the energy exchange which the practitioner facilitates.

The goal is to restore the body to normal.

The practitioner may diagnose by working with the five elements, earth, water, fire, metal and wood.

## Our front cover:

Heather Bruce has been treating people with needles, herbs and advice for 20 years.

A senior acupuncturist and naturopath, Heather is also an educator.

An expert in women's health she specialises in difficult cases around hormonal and emotional problems.

A working mother with four children, Heather also writes on healthcare problems from an acupuncture framework.





A traditional Chinese medicine practitioner may work on the concepts of hot and cold, full or empty, and internal or external, to determine where the energy is blocked.

Just by looking at the tongue, an acupuncturist will tell by the fur on it how the digestive system is working and by looking at the body of the tongue will diagnose the state of the underlying constitution.

The width of the tongue, its colour, cracks and state of relaxation will paint a complete picture of the state of health.

If an acupuncturist wants to diagnose by checking the pulse, it will be checked at various places on the wrist.

The pulse relates to the heart, liver and kidney meridians, and are measured at various levels.

Acupuncture specialist Heather Bruce says the meridians are felt above as well as inside the body.

These pulse sites are so sensitive, that they can change very quickly, even giving different readings before and after cleaning your teeth.

Palpation is another method of diagnosis which involves feeling for acupuncture points which may be blocked.

Acupuncture will work in conjunction with Western medicine as well as on its own.

Patients who are on Western medication will often find their dosages need to be altered after acupuncture treatment to suit the revitalised *qi* of the body.

Heather Bruce says this is particularly important when patients are on medications for blood pressure disorders, as sometimes continuing the stronger medication be detrimental to the patient following acupuncture treatment.

What happens with a visit to an acupuncturist? First a full and careful medical history is taken and acupuncturist will ask about your physical, emotional and spiritual health.

There may be questions about seemingly unrelated topics, but an acupuncturist is always looking for the cause of a physical or emotional symptom.

The diagnosis will be based the pulse, tongue or palpation methods. Often they will use all three.

Next, the patient will lie down and fine, sterile needles will be placed at appropriate points along the meridians.

Sometimes, moxa, the slow-burning dried leaves of the common mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris* will be placed in small balls on the ends of the needles and lit to gently heat and increase the

toning effect of the treatment.

Most acupuncturists will also work with Chinese herbs and patients be prescribed a mixture of herbs to continue the treatment.

Where moxibustion is used to warm, cupping — using bamboo or glass cups over acupuncture points — is used to draw cold from the body.

A lighted taper is placed in the cup to create a vacuum and the skin is drawn into it.

After a treatment, sit quietly for a while until you feel balanced again. Sometimes the shift in energy can be so profound that a patient may feel quite lightheaded for a time following treatment.

Many people ask if acupuncture is painful.

Usually, the fine acupuncture needles do not hurt, but, if the patient is tense and stressed, there may be some initial pain.

Some of the needles penetrate quite deeply, and others sit on the surface.

Qualified acupuncture practitioners always use disposable needles.

Nowadays some practitioners also use laser acupuncture which doesn't involve any physical penetration of the skin. ■



SHOWING THE FOUR DIRECTIONS WITH EARTH AS CENTRE

## Understanding the Five Elements

**WOOD** is activating, enlivening, free flowing, adaptable and creative.

It is the East where the sun rises.

Wood is a quality of energy and not limited to only one field of expression.

It is a quality that is seen in the unrestrained enthusiasm of children or the first rush of Spring and is represented by the liver and gall bladder.

**FIRE** is a climax, the zenith, the crowning point, ease, accomplishment, abundance and a full radiant expression.

It is expressed in the South where the sun rises to its maximum. In summer it is the hottest time of the year and the season of luxuriant growth.

In acupuncture terms it is expressed by heat inside the body. The organ represented is the heart.

**METAL** is the Autumn, or in the more appropriate American term, the Fall.

Metal is contraction, condensation, movement toward the centre or a withdrawal that keeps only that which is most precious.

Metal is seen in the West where the Sun sets, the light declines, the darkness begins and Yin dominates.

Metal is represented by the lungs.

**WATER** is Winter where all seems withdrawn when seen from above but is secretly active below.

It is the frozen end of the year, a time of rest, darkness and stillness but characterised by recharging and regeneration.

Is it more like a tomb or a womb?

Water is linked to the North where the Sun never shines. This phase comes under the influence of the kidneys.

**EARTH** is the central phase, the place of change and transformation, the pivot or hub of the wheel.

Earth is the preserver and maintainer from day to day.

All the seasons take place on Earth and their effects can be seen through the Earth.

The organs associated with Earth are the stomach and the spleen.