

# Acupuncture in the Treatment of Sports Injuries

By Nancy Botting



Acupuncture stimulates the body to produce its own pain relieving chemicals called "endorphins". Endorphins work to block pain messages travelling through the nervous system to the brain

**ACUPUNCTURE IS BECOMING** a common and much sought after therapeutic modality for a variety of sport injuries and musculoskeletal conditions. Many rehabilitation professionals are combining conventional Western medicine soft tissue rehabilitation techniques with the practice of the ancient art of Chinese Acupuncture. And they are seeing phenomenal results in improved recovery times.

So how does Acupuncture work?

In simple terms, acupuncture stimulates the body to produce its own pain relieving chemicals called "endorphins". Endorphins work to block pain messages travelling through the nervous system to the brain. The result is a relief in pain caused by injury or overuse, and a general state of body relaxation. In essence, acupuncture can assist your own biochemical system to facilitate or boost your own body's natural healing system. All natural, no drugs, no side effects - other than the positive benefit of a reduction of pain and general body relaxation, giving you the perfect environment to heal.

The origin of Acupuncture lies in the ancient art of Traditional Chinese Medicine. For over 2,500 years, TCM has focused on determining the root cause of the

pain. This approach works to balance the flow of energy (or "Chi") and blood throughout the entire body, allowing a more harmonious state to be achieved. The belief is that our bodies have a series of acupuncture meridians or channels that allow the normal flow of the body's energy. Each acupuncture point along these paths has a special purpose or function. If there is trauma or injury at one of these points, a blockage in the flow of energy can result and a problem can be seen further along the meridian. This is why an acupuncture point in the hand or foot can treat neck pain or a headache, because the required channel or meridian flows from the hand or foot to the head.

Often, there are numerous blockages at many acupuncture points. Some acupuncture points lie deep within the body and others closer to the surface. Over the centuries, the Chinese have accumulated diagnostic theories associated with the alteration in the flow of energy within these meridians and specific acupuncture treatment points to clear these blockages and to treat to specific conditions. The skill lies in the experience of the practitioner and their diagnosis of the most pronounced blockage.

Over the last 30 years, extensive research in the Western world has attempted to prove scientifically how and why acupuncture is so effective. French researchers, more than 10 years ago, were able to demonstrate that the traditional acupuncture meridians did actually exist where these old Chinese text books said they were. They did so by injecting patients with a radio-active dye and doing a special X-Ray highlighting the active acupuncture point. Other researchers have demonstrated that at acupuncture points a difference in electrical conductivity can be measured. Endorphins have been shown to be released within the nervous system with the stimulation of certain acupuncture points. This can explain the pain relieving and analgesic benefits of acupuncture.

Acupuncture has been proven to effectively treat pain and improve circulation and oxygenation of tissue with modern scientific inquiry. In addition to this, many North American Sport Medicine practitioners are embracing this exciting research and using acupuncture to speed up the healing process of their patients.

Acupuncture needles are very thin filaments and are more like "pins" than needles. They come in a variety of lengths depending on the depth of the tissue being treated. Most needles are inserted only 0.5 - 1.0" below the skin into specifically landmarked points. Patients describe feeling only minimal discomfort as the "pins" are inserted, some feeling no discomfort at all. Once in place, there should be no significant discomfort, in fact the opposite is most often the result; reduction or elimination of the pain being treated and a general relaxation of the affected area are often quickly achieved. Acupuncture treatment sessions generally last 15-30 minutes and positive results are achieved within 1-8 sessions.

So, the next time you are sidelined with an injury consider Acupuncture as an option. There are proven benefits to speeding up acute healing times and to clearing physiological blockages with chronic injury. You are safe within the hands of a certified Acupuncture practitioner.

**Arguably the most profound finding to come out of research into acupuncture is the release of an increased number of free floating stem cells seen in the blood stream. This is believed to explain the rejuvenation and regeneration effects that can occur with acupuncture**



**Nancy Botting** is a Registered Physiotherapist with a Diploma in Sport Physiotherapy. She was a member of Canada's medical team for the Atlanta Olympics, Athens, Beijing and London Paralympics. She loves to compete in outrigger canoe racing and you can check her clinic out at [www.physicaledgephysio.com](http://www.physicaledgephysio.com) located in Oakville, Ontario