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Demystifying Acupuncture

People have all sorts of ideas about acupuncture. Many assume it hurts, and memories of those huge vaccination needles at school keep them away. Others question whether it's safe: are the needles sterile? Is there's any chance of injury? Some people just assume it's some weird form of voodoo, or that it simply doesn't work!

The truth is that it really doesn't hurt, it can work wonders for many different conditions, and it is perfectly safe provided you work with a well-trained practitioner. Unfortunately acupuncture is not yet regulated in Nova Scotia, and anyone can hang out a shingle and call themselves an acupuncturist. Scary, but if you do your research and make sure your practitioner is a member of a reputable association, there's no need to worry. The Nova Scotia Association of Acupuncturists or NSAA (acupuncturens.com) holds the highest standards in the province, so you can rest assured that its members are well-trained, and use safe and sterile needle technique. Extended health insurance often covers acupuncture (as performed by a registered acupuncturist), so check with your provider.

It is important to find out what type of acupuncture is being provided. Some types of acupuncture are designed to treat pain and loosen muscles, and are good at that, but may not be holistic or based on Chinese Medicine theory. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) style acupuncture treats the body and mind as a whole, and is tailored to each individual. It uses acu-points located along the meridians (energy lines), each point influencing the body's energy in a specific way. The main principle is to unblock the flow of energy, and bring balance. In this way, illness is addressed at its root, and effects are long-lasting, rather than just temporarily getting rid of symptoms.

And the needles are nothing to worry about! They are sterile and one time use only. They are small, fine and flexible – about the width of a cat's whisker. In fact, 10 acupuncture needles can fit inside the tip of a hypodermic needle! They are inserted quickly and painlessly, and often clients feel nothing at all and even fall asleep!

Many have heard of acupuncture for pain relief, but may not know that it is amazingly effective for many other ailments. Acupuncture has been around for over 2000 years, and, along with herbology and other TCM techniques, has been the primary health care system for millions of people. Digestive disorders, anxiety/depression, insomnia, low energy, menstrual issues, hot flashes, headaches, addictions – you name it, and acupuncture can probably treat it! It is also great for general health maintenance and well-being, and often clients say they've never felt so relaxed!

As with all true healing, acupuncture is not a quick fix (though results can often be dramatic!) and requires a series of treatments. As well, it requires participation from the client – no one can fix us; we need to take responsibility for our own health. Acupuncture can push us in the right direction and help us out of a rut, but for lasting results, we must be willing to work with our diet, lifestyle and thought patterns for true healing to take place. Many of my clients have been helped out of a downward spiral with acupuncture and Chinese medicine. It's boosted their energy, decreased pain and brought a sense well-being. In this way, they were able to implement healthy habits, regain a zest for life and get their lives back on track!

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