



### Tai-Nan Wang L.Ac., O.M.D.

4295 Gesner Street, Suite 1A  
San Diego, CA 92117  
619-684-1848

## Oriental Medicine for Injury Rehab and Relief

After sustaining an injury, the healing process goes through two stages. The first is called the acute stage and is characterized by redness, swelling, inflammation and pain. The second is the chronic stage in which a patient may experience pain only when overusing the injured body part. Noticeable signs of inflammation may be nonexistent or minimal. In general, acute stages last from a few days to about three weeks, at which point any residual problems and pain are considered to have reached the chronic stage.



Physical trauma resulting from accidents, post-operative conditions, labor, disease or other causes requires different treatment for each stage of convalescence. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine provide a comprehensive treatment from the very beginning of an injury throughout recovery. To help rehabilitate a patient and provide pain relief after an injury, a practitioner may have to resolve a condition known as blood stasis.

Blood stasis, according to acupuncture and Oriental medicine, occurs when the flow of blood slows down and blood begins to congeal. The pain associated with this condition is fixed, sharp and with clear boundaries. This means the pain does not change locations and can be located precisely by the patient.

A good example of blood stasis is a bruise on the leg. Judging by the color changes on the skin, unpleasant sensations and perhaps some puffiness, it is evident the leg endured a physical trauma. All evidence points to an eruption of blood vessels resulting in a small, visible pool of blood.

For a patient contending with the aftermath of an injury, getting back on one's feet again may take a variety of modalities to provide pain relief and help in regaining full mobility and range of motion in the injured area.

**If you have suffered physical trauma and still experience pain or other symptoms as you enter the chronic stage of recovery call for an appointment today!**

## Boost Your Fitness and Sports Performance

When a top athlete like Kobe Bryant tweets a picture of acupuncture needles in his leg, you know it's time to consider how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help improve your sports performance. All athletes and coaches are involved in an ongoing search for ways to improve performance and gain a competitive edge over their rivals. Many are finding that acupuncture can often provide that edge.

From moving more fluidly to recovering from an injury, acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you to stay active, boost your fitness level, and recover more quickly. By following the principles of Oriental medicine, an acupuncture treatment can strengthen body function and restore internal harmony and balance. Professional sports teams and top athletes often have an acupuncturist on staff to treat injuries and keep them performing at their peak.

Practitioners of Oriental medicine can help athletes, or even the amateur "weekend warrior," in many ways. In addition to acupuncture, tight, stiff muscles may be helped by manual techniques such as cupping, a suction-based massage, and Gua Sha, a Chinese form of friction massage. In 2011, researchers at the University of Duisburg-Essen found that Gua Sha was effective at treating chronic pain and muscle stiffness in the lower back. In India, researchers from Majeedia Hospital found cupping helped to reduce pain, inflammation, and muscle stiffness in patients diagnosed with knee osteoarthritis. Cupping also improved blood supply to the area and simulated light exercise, leading to increased muscle flexibility in the region, researchers explained.

Some of the best Olympic athletes incorporate acupuncture into their wellness programs. China's 7 foot 6 inch basketball center, Yao Ming, used acupuncture and Oriental medicine to help him recover after undergoing surgery on his ankle. Chinese swimmer, Wang Qun, was photographed doing some last minute training in Beijing with round marks on her back from cupping.

**Call today to see how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you meet your fitness goals and assist in recovering from an injury!**

## **Want Less Pain and a Faster Recovery?**

Acupuncture is well known for its effectiveness in reducing most types of pain, including pain from sports-related injuries due to trauma, or overuse syndromes involving the musculoskeletal system and its soft tissues. Trauma to these soft tissues, including ligaments, tendons and muscles are generally the result from a fall, blow, sprain/strain, collision, compression, or disruption of the healing process due to inflammation.

Due to its broad range of applications, acupuncture can be used during any of the phases of the injury healing process. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine may be used to help decrease swelling, spasms and inflammation, in addition to assisting in pain management, increasing range of motion and promoting healing.

The focus is not only to treat the injury, but also to treat any underlying conditions that may predispose an individual to injuries. This is especially important when treating chronic or recurrent injuries that interfere with life activities or athletic performance.

Acupuncture helps reduce pain and enable activity for athletes experiencing Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome (PFPS), Plantar Fasciitis, ankle sprain, and soft tissue adhesion, according to the Acupuncture Research Resource Center (UK).

In a study that covered a range of injuries and acupuncture techniques, researchers found that the underlying diagnostic principles of Oriental medicine could be useful for treating sports injuries.

Researchers at the University of Tokyo found that administering acupuncture above a healthy Achilles tendon led to increased blood flow and oxygen supply to the region, which indicates that this treatment could also help an injured tendon to heal.

Furthermore, athletes with chronic rotator cuff tendinitis who received acupuncture experienced significantly less pain, according to a study from the University of Heidelberg.

## **Strengthening Exercises to Reduce Chance of Injury**

One of the best ways to wake up is by giving your arms a great big stretch in the morning, and if you can get on your feet and throw your whole body into it, all the better. Deep stretches are an excellent way to stimulate blood flow and invigorate your body and mind. Not only do they feel good, but they can also be performed as strengthening exercises and help reduce the chance of repetitive stress injuries.

Repetitive stress injuries come in many different forms. A soccer player may contend with tendonitis in the knee from relentlessly kicking the ball across the field. A janitor may feel the pain of bursitis in the shoulders from mopping floors all day. Even sitting in an office for eight hours and typing may cause a person discomfort in the hands and arms, plus pain in the lower back from being sedentary for extended periods of time.

There are many benefits to stretching, even before a problem sets in. One may expect an improvement in posture, a reduction in stiffness from under-used muscles, and an increased flow of blood and oxygen to the brain. Perhaps one of the best ways to counter the effects of repetitive activities is through the practice of tai chi.

This style of exercise is flowing, rhythmic and meditative. The pace is usually slow to moderate. Some may even say those practicing look like they are engaged in a well-choreographed slow-motion dance. In China today, many people, some well into their golden years, can be found openly practicing tai chi in the local parks. Often, it is performed as a group activity, creating a supportive social environment as well.

Tai chi movements are very structured and coordinate with the breath to bring about a more tranquil state of mind. The gentle, continuous flow of the movements is well-suited for people of all different athletic ability. However, there are many common stretches that can also be safely performed at home if tai chi instruction is not readily available.

To help achy or tired arms and hands, try this finger stretch. Start by extending your arm in front of you, with your palm facing outwards. Spread your fingers and gently, one by one, pull each finger delicately toward your body. Spend a few seconds massaging each one if you feel inclined. When finished, wring out your hands by giving them a good shake.

Another good way to loosen up tension in the hands and forearms is to do the wrist stretch. Simply tap the insides of your wrists together 8 times and then do the same for the outsides of your wrists. Your fingers should be pointing upwards during the inner wrist move, and conversely, they will be dangling upside down for the outer move.

The shoulders may need some attention and loosening up, as they tend to become stressed without us even realizing it. Every couple of hours or so, take a few minutes to engage in shoulder rolls. Lift your shoulders as high as they will go while leaving the rest of your arms relaxed. Roll the shoulders forward three to four times, and then roll them backwards three to four times.

Sometimes life gets busy and it's easy to forget ourselves as we delve into a project or work. Setting an alarm for every hour can help you remember to bring attention to those body parts which absorb stress easily. For many, these include the shoulders, jaw and lower back.

**If reaching a level of physical comfort is proving to be difficult, call today for an appointment.**

## Acupuncture Enhances Endurance Athletics Performance

Many people realize the value of acupuncture and Oriental Medicine to treat sports injuries, but did you know that it can enhance athletic performance?

In 2010, a German practitioner of acupuncture and Oriental Medicine specializing in sports injuries conducted a scientific study to measure how acupuncture affects a runner's performance. The research paper "Improved Performance in Endurance Sports through Acupuncture" appeared in the German medical publication *Sportverletz Sportschaden*.



The study included 3 groups of participants, all of whom were runners. One group received acupuncture, another received placebo acupuncture treatments, while the last group did not undergo any treatment at all.

For the trial, all the participants ran a distance of 5 kilometers once a week for a total of 4 weeks. At the start of the study the maximum pulse rates were taken for each runner. Their pulse rates were taken again right after finishing the run and 1, 2 and 5 minutes later.

The pulse rates for each runner were then multiplied with their respective maximum rate. This new figure is what is known as the complexity factor. These calculations provided the basis on which the researcher could draw reliable conclusions.

While all 3 groups demonstrated positive results, it was the acupuncture group which displayed "highly significant" results in the area of athletic fortitude.

Those lucky enough to be in this group yielded the most significant improvement in their running times and complexity factors. Thus, the researcher concluded definitively that acupuncture increases athletic performance in the domain of endurance sports.

Source: Benner, S., & Benner, K. (2010). Verbesserung der Leistungsfähigkeit durch Akupunktur im Ausdauersport. Sportverletzung - Sportschaden, 24(03), 140-143. doi:10.1055/s-0029-1245406.

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## **Injury Prevention and Healing**

Fitness clubs across the country are full of enthusiastic individuals giving it their all to get fit or drop a few pounds. Unfortunately, trying to do too much too quickly can result in a painful price.

Common sports injuries treated by acupuncture and Oriental medicine include pulled muscles, neck pain, shoulder impingement, tennis elbow, lower back strain, pulled groin, hamstring strain, runner's knee, shin splints, ankle sprain, tendinitis, and foot pain.

Treatment for a sports injury with acupuncture and Oriental medicine has two objectives:

### **1. Reduce pain and inflammation of the injured area.**

There is evidence that acupuncture can aid healing and resolution of injuries, including reducing pain, increasing local micro-circulation and attracting white blood cells to the area (both of which speed the healing rate), and aid dispersal of swelling and bruising.

### **2. Prevent further injuries and enhance athletic performance.**

The best way to approach a fitness program without causing injury is to avoid diving in. Instead, take it slow and get the joints and muscles you haven't used in a while ready to be used again.

**If you suffer a setback in your fitness routine, call today for more information about treatment options.**

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