

Inside Integrative Medicine

June 2024

Group Classes
are Virtual

Acupuncture and Cancer Care

What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture has been practiced in China and other Asian countries for thousands of years. Acupuncture is a safe, gentle, evidence-based medical treatment. The use of acupuncture to treat side effects of cancer care has significantly increased in recent years and is now offered within many hospitals, including the MD Anderson Cancer Center. Acupuncture can be used on its own or alongside other treatments to manage symptoms and improve overall quality of life and well-being.

What are the Potential Benefits of Acupuncture? Acupuncture does not treat cancer, rather, it can be safely used alongside conventional care to help provide relief from cancer and cancer treatment related symptoms

Acupuncture can help with:

- Cancer and cancer treatment related pain
- Chemotherapy induced and post-operative nausea & vomiting
- Fatigue
- Constipation/Post-operative ileus
- Hot flashes/ Night sweats
- Xerostomia (dry mouth)
- Chemotherapy Induced Peripheral Neuropathy

Who provides acupuncture?

Acupuncture treatments should only be provided by a qualified, state licensed acupuncturist. In Texas, acupuncturists are required to sit for national board exams given by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM). The NCCAOM requires that each acupuncturist complete a minimum four year graduate level program from an accredited acupuncture school. The NCCAOM requires that all acupuncturists complete continuing education to re-certify.



What to expect during an acupuncture treatment?

During an acupuncture treatment, very thin stainless-steel needles are inserted into specific acupuncture points on the body and left in place for 20-30 minutes. The needle's effects may be modified as needed with manual or electrical stimulation and/or heat. The number of acupuncture sessions and frequency of treatments may vary according to the condition being treated, with chronic conditions requiring a longer treatment plan. Typically, two treatments weekly for 3-4 weeks are initially recommended, but treatment plans can vary according to the issue being addressed. Treatments may then decrease in frequency as the treatment plan progresses and the symptoms improve. The initial acupuncture consultation and treatment takes approximately one hour. Follow up sessions take approximately 30-45 minutes. Consider wearing loose comfortable clothing and avoid having a large meal, alcohol, and coffee just before an appointment, a light healthy snack is best.

Is Acupuncture safe during cancer treatment?

Acupuncture is a safe and effective treatment. Side effects may include bleeding, bruising, and pain, although most patients report very little discomfort. More commonly, patients report feeling a sensation of heaviness, warmth and /or tingling at the needle insertion site. Less common side effects may include fainting and temporary numbness at the acupuncture site. Patient's lab results are reviewed before each treatment to check for risk of bleeding or infection.

Summary

Acupuncture is an effective therapy to help manage symptoms related to cancer and treatment. Acupuncture can be safely and effectively used as a part of an integrative approach to cancer care. For additional information regarding the efficacy and application of acupuncture visit the following websites:

National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine www.nccaom.org

National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/cam/hp/acupuncture-pdq

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health www.nccih.nih.gov/health/acupuncture

Integrative Oncology Consultation

Our physicians can give guidance on achieving a comprehensive and integrative approach to your cancer care.

Exercise/Physical Activity Consultation

A senior physical therapist provides recommendations on achieving safe and optimal exercise.

Oncology Acupuncture Treatment

Acupuncture is a safe and often effective medical treatment that can be used to manage side effects from cancer and related treatments, including nausea and vomiting, pain, neuropathy, hot flashes, fatigue and dry mouth. Treatments are \$80.

Oncology Massage Treatment

Oncology massage may help patients address anxiety, relieve pain, decrease fatigue and improve sleep quality. Treatments are \$55.

Health Psychology Consultation

A licensed clinical psychologist will provide both evaluation and interventions to help with lifestyle change and address symptoms such as anxiety, poor sleep and low mood.

Yoga Therapy Consultation

A yoga therapist provides guidance on how to use yoga and meditation to help lower stress, improve sleep, mood and overall quality of life. Cost: \$50 per session.

Nutrition Consultation

A registered dietitian provides personalized nutrition counseling and education to help patients manage side effects and reach their goals during and after cancer treatment. Education emphasizes a whole food, plant-based diet for optimal health.

Music Therapy

Individual music therapy is provided by a board-certified music therapist (MT-BC) and involves engaging in music interactively in a variety of ways, with outcomes including anxiety reduction, fostered well-being and exploring ways of reconnecting to music for daily quality of life. Cost: \$50 per session.

*Prices for IMC services may be subject to change depending on insurance coverage.

View audio and video resources online: www.mdanderson.org/integrativemedcenter

How to Register for our Virtual Group Classes:

1. Call the Integrative Medicine Center at 832-750-3685.
2. All classes are free.
3. Complete e-update *liability waiver and telemedicine consent in MyChart at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled class.

Note: All classes are open to both patients and caregivers.

June 2024

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Yoga for Health 10:30-11:30	Yoga Nidra 10:00-11:00 <i>2nd Tues.</i>	Yoga for Health 10:30-11:30	No Classes	Yoga for Health 10:30-11:30
Connect & Reflect with Music 1:30-2:30	5:00 - 6:00 <i>4th Tues.</i>	Healing Through Writing 2:00-3:00 <i>2nd Wed.</i>		
	Pranayama/Breathing 10:00-11:00 <i>1st & 3rd Tues.</i>			

Group Class Descriptions:

Yoga for Health: Features a gentle form of yoga, including stretching, breathing, relaxation, and meditation techniques. No prior yoga experience is required.

Yoga Nidra/Meditative Relaxation: This is a guided meditation in the supine position to bring you into a state of deep restful awareness.

Healing Through Writing: Using expressive writing as a tool to identify and process difficult emotions in a supportive environment.

Pranayama/Breathing: The practice of Pranayama involves breath regulation through various breathing exercises.

Connect & Reflect with Music: A interactive and supportive music group, led by a Board-Certified Music Therapist, using music engagement and conversation to enhance well-being and encourage connectedness. No music experience is required.

Staff Spotlight



Alexandra Ramirez-Erkal

Acupuncturist, LAc, MAOM

Alexandra, a proud Houstonian of 25 years, graduated from the American College of Acupuncture in Houston, Texas, in 2003. She earned her medical degree in 1998 from the University of Carabobo in Venezuela. She had always been interested in integrative medicine methods and focused her medical thesis on shamanism in an indigenous population in Venezuela's Amazon. She taught at the American College of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine in Houston. Her background in Western medicine enabled her to integrate traditional Chinese medicine and help students adopt a holistic approach that brings balance to patients' health and well-being. She worked as a private practitioner in Houston's medical center district and focused on oncology acupuncture and pain management. Outside of her professional life, Alexandra enjoys being outdoors, playing tennis, and exploring international cuisine. She also loves spending time with her husband, two daughters, and two cats.