

QUESTIONS PATIENTS ASK



- Acupuncture as preventive medicine
- Your struggles can become your strengths

I don't have anything wrong with me. Why should I consider acupuncture?

Throughout history, acupuncture has been used as a preventive tool as well as for treating specific disorders. You don't have to have any major problems for acupuncture to be beneficial. Moreover, "not having anything wrong" may be different from being "healthy."

Many people have small, irritating concerns for which they would not consider seeing a physician. Perhaps you are more tired than you think you should be for your age and condition. Maybe you would like more focus and direction, or more ability to experience joy. Maybe you get colds too regularly, digestive problems are beginning to limit your enjoyment of food, or you get "the blues" during a particular season. Maybe you're just not as satisfied with your life as you think you might be. Acupuncture can help.

In addition, it is good to recognize that physical or emotional symptoms are often the "tip of the iceberg"

and rarely show up before an imbalance has gone unrecognized for quite a while. For example, it is commonly known that angina (chest pain) only shows up after the blood vessels around the heart are over 75 percent occluded. In acupuncture, we help correct imbalances before they become full-blown diseases, and we help people find ways of tending themselves so they can thrive in every way—body, mind, and spirit.

My practitioner tells me I am treated mostly in the Water element. What does that mean?

You're probably aware that Water is one of the Five Elements of Chinese medicine. To the ancients, these were the basic elements seen in nature: Water, Wood (any growing things), Fire (sunshine), Earth (the fertile ground), and Metal (rocks, minerals). Each element has properties that sustain life and help it thrive. We too are part of nature; we have all these same phases of energy within. And sometimes, to help us thrive, we too need to sup-

port one or more of these energies. We may be like a plant that needs more sun or water.

In your case, your practitioner has taken stock of the condition of your body, mind, and spirit, and has assessed that supporting Water will enhance your health. With support, your struggles can become your strengths: fear can turn into courage, fatigue into persevering energy, and desolation into faith in yourself and the future.

Your practitioner also has assessed your strengths, and sees that the gifts of the Water element are shining in you. For example, perhaps you are

clever and can figure out how to do just about anything. Perhaps you are courageous, ambitious, and have limitless goals. Perhaps your reflective thoughtfulness is valuable to you and those around you.

So, when your practitioner tells you she is treating a particular element, ask her about the opportunities and gifts of that element. You may discover—in a new way—your strengths and your challenges.

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Photo by Celia Pearson