

Self-care after Acupuncture

By Aimee Poirier, Lic. Ac.

When patients ask me what they do after an acupuncture treatment, I usually reply “nothing”. “Nothing,” they ask as if doing nothing is something only found on Mars. I mean this in the most helpful way. Doing “nothing” can be a really great follow up to an acupuncture session because while you’re doing nothing, your body is doing a whole lot of something, mainly healing itself. Let me further explain,

Rest:

If you can, take a nap (I know life doesn’t always allow it). Or at least take it easy. Don’t plan to rearrange your furniture or paint the house that day. Perhaps you want to give yourself permission does not make that extra stop on the way home. Listen to what your body is telling you. Many people tell me they feel “tired” after a session. Please note, that sometimes feeling tired is another way of being relaxed and more often than not, is a foreign feeling to many of our patients. This is the benefit of your time on our table. Enjoy this relaxation for when you are calm, you are healing!

Exercise:

Don’t plan to hit the gym hard after a treatment. When a patient plans to do an intense workout, I generally suggest that they come for their session afterward. Acupuncture can sometimes boost an individual’s energy which is wonderful, especially if you have been feeling ill and finally have the energy to “get stuff done.” My advice, take it easy. If you are feeling energetic after a treatment, opt for a leisurely walk instead. Keep it gentle and take it easy. Remember your body processes healing differently than the mind perceives. While you may be feeling good, easy still does it.

Eat good foods:

Acupuncture flushes toxins from our organs, cleaning our bodies from the inside out. Eating good quality food assists in this process because we are, after all, what we eat. Choose fresh fruits and vegetables; snack on nuts and seeds and try high-quality/organic meat and fish. Avoid sugar, refined carbohydrates and processed foods. Processed foods contain harmful chemicals that disrupt our nervous systems. You have done your body a service by having an acupuncture session, so why not continue that celebration by filling your body with good quality gasoline.

Hydrate:

It’s always good to drink water, but only when you’re thirsty. In our culture, people believe they should drink 8-10 glasses of water daily. Personally, this may not be the prescription for all. In general, you can tell that your body is hydrated by the color of your urine. A light-yellow or clear color indicates hydration, a dark-yellow color indicates dehydration. Either can happen by drinking more or less of the “8-10 glass rule.” It’s always imperative that we listen to our bodies, something that more often than not, we forget to do.

Heat or Ice?

This is a very common question I receive, especially when it comes to pain management. My usual response is, "what feels better to you?" Generally, warm, moist heat is best for muscle tension; a hot shower, for example, can be a great way to further detox and relax our muscles after a session. If you have a recent injury that is swollen or hot to the touch, ice is more appropriate. Either way, bringing blood to an area of the body that needs it, is always a good thing. Many pain conditions are caused by stagnation which occurs when channels through the body become blocked. These blocked channels create a stop in energy flow which eventually can lead to pain. It's like having a clogged sink. Nothing can properly drain or move forward when water and debris are backing up. Acupuncture seeks to restore this flow and clear any debris away from our channels. Treatment of pain in this way may make icing counterproductive because it promotes stagnation and slows down the healing process.