IS ACUPUNCTURE COVERED BY MEDICAL INSURANCE?

Unfortunately, in the state of Alabama, insurance companies do not cover medical acupuncture. Payment for the full amount of the visit is expected when you check in to the clinic.

COST

- Initial visit (evaluation and treatment): $120
- Follow-up visit (re-evaluation and treatment): $60

ACUPUNCTURE AT UAB MEDICINE

Carolina Salvador, MD, director of the Integrative Oncology and Medicine Clinic, has undergone acupuncture training and certification at the Helms Medical Institute to provide this service to UAB Medicine patients with cancer.

For more information or to make an appointment, please call 205-934-5077.
ACUPUNCTURE

- Acupuncture is an ancient form of Chinese medicine that dates back over 5,000 years.
- It is based on the concept that the body has specific channels (meridians) through which energy (chi) flows.
- When this energy, or chi, is flowing smoothly, there will be no specific pain or disease. But if the chi is deficient or excessive, or if it’s not flowing freely, pain and/or disease can develop. When acupuncture needles are placed in specific points on the skin, energy is redirected to help bring about a healing response.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT DURING TREATMENT?

During your first office visit, the practitioner will ask you about your health conditions, lifestyle, and behavior. This is done to obtain a complete picture of your treatment needs and the behaviors that may contribute to your condition. He or she also will examine your tongue and check your pulse in both wrists. Inform the practitioner about any medications you are taking and all medical conditions you have. Treatment may take place over a period of several weeks or more.

During your treatment, you will lie on a padded table while your acupuncturist inserts thin needles into your skin at specific points on your body. Where the needles are placed depends on the problem being treated. Most people feel little or no pain from the needles.

Acupuncture needles are sterile, metallic, solid, and hair-thin. People experience acupuncture differently, but most feel no or minimal pain as the needles are inserted. Between five and 20 needles are used in a typical treatment. In most cases, the needles will remain in place 10-30 minutes while you lie still and relax.

Your acupuncturist will remove the needles at the end of your session and dispose of them. People have different experiences with acupuncture. Some feel relaxed after their treatment, while others have more energy.

BENEFITS OF ACUPUNCTURE

- Clinical studies suggest that acupuncture is effective for treating nausea/vomiting and some types of pain. There’s also evidence that it can be effective in treating hot flashes, xerostomia (dry mouth), and fatigue.
- Though acupuncture also may help with other symptoms such as constipation, loss of appetite, insomnia, anxiety, fatigue, depression, peripheral neuropathy and stress, not enough research has been conducted to prove this.
- The World Health Organization recognizes acupuncture as an effective treatment for more than 35 common illnesses. Acupuncture also is known to normalize bodily functions, boost the immune system, relieve drug and alcohol withdrawal symptoms, and support lifestyle modifications such as losing weight and quitting smoking. Acupuncture also may help reduce stress, tension, and depression.
- That said, acupuncture is a safe and relatively inexpensive treatment option. If patients are interested, and their physicians approve, it’s an important option to consider for helping to manage uncontrolled symptoms.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Relatively few complications have been reported from acupuncture. However, acupuncture can cause potentially serious side effects if not delivered properly by a qualified practitioner. If you have received a diagnosis from a doctor, you may wish to ask your doctor whether acupuncture might help.

Discuss acupuncture with your treating doctor first. Acupuncture is not for everyone. Discuss all the treatments and medicines (dietary supplements, prescription and over-the-counter) you are taking. If you have a pacemaker, are at risk for infection, have chronic skin problems, are pregnant, or have breast or other implants, be sure to tell your doctor. Acupuncture may be risky to your health if you fail to mention these matters.