



INTEGRATIVEalternativeHEALTHCARE

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Acupuncture By Christina Fick, L.Ac.

Christina Fick is a licensed Acupuncturist in downtown Evergreen. She studied health and alternative medicine in Hawaii, San Diego, and Colorado and holds a Masters Degree in Acupuncture. In April 2013 she'll receive a second Masters degree in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Herbology and in September 2013 will begin working on her Doctorate degree. Christina strives for affordable, practical integrative medicine and hopes to eventually offer the Gerson Therapy on an outpatient basis. Visit her website for tons of information: [ChristinaFick.com](http://ChristinaFick.com) or call 303-594-8348.

A modality is a therapeutic method that involves the physical treatment of a disorder. How is this different from acupuncture? Acupuncture can also be defined as a modality, since technically it physically treats disorders, but I like to think of these modalities as subcategories of Chinese medicine. Chinese medicine is an umbrella term that sums up acupuncture, all of its modalities and Chinese herbal therapy. So why don't we just use acupuncture? Is it that acupuncture is inferior? Not at all. They simply work in tandem boosting one another's efficiency. In Chinese herbal therapy, we call this mutual enhancement. I like to use the analogy that acupuncture works very well with your nervous system (electrical system) and can, in turn, help your circulatory system. It does this through passive movement, when needles in certain points make the nervous system gently respond. Modalities use more of an active technique, where mostly blood (circulatory system) is being physically moved, just like massage, where you are physically moving the lymph and circulatory system under the musculature.

“...it is like a massage from the inside out!”

So what kind of modalities do we use in Chinese medicine? Here are the most commonly used therapies at my clinic:

**Cupping** is a gentle, yet effective therapy used mostly for pain. Cupping feels great! Glass cups are used with a small flame to create a gentle vacuum under the skin, pulling fresh, oxygenated blood up to the surface. It stimulates the lymphatic system to move old and stagnate blood out of the area and promotes the movement of fresh blood to heal the site and decrease pain. Cupping can be used for back, neck, shoulder, leg and menstrual pain. It can be used to help loosen phlegm causing a cough. Cupping is great for local tension and aches; general pain; neck, back and hip pain; menstrual pain or cramps; muscle tightness and tension. I like to use

cupping for pretty much anything, because it is like a massage from the inside out!

**Electro-Stimulation** is a therapy used for almost any condition. Small wires are clipped onto the ends of certain needles and a gentle pulse is sent from one needle to the other. This therapy can supercharge a treatment, because the electricity can specify the direction, quantity and rate of the movement of Qi (energy) or blood. This is a more direct way to tell the body what it needs to do. The pulsing of the electricity can be very relaxing. E-stim is used for severe/chronic diseases, pain, scar tissue, decreased circulation, headaches, injuries, digestive issues. I was trained to use a special E-stim machine, which is more effective than a TENS unit (electrical machine with pads you place on the skin). It's an asymmetrical biphasic machine, which means the electricity travels in one direction only, making the signal to the body very clear. This in turn greatly increases the efficiency of some treatments.

**Moxa or Moxibustion** is simply the application of the herb Mugwort (*Artemisia Vulgaris*). In Chinese medicine, the 'temperature' of the herb is always considered. For example, watermelon would be considered cold, while cayenne peppers are considered hot. Mugwort is the warmest of all Chinese herbs. Heat moves your Blood and Qi like lava, while the application of cold herbs congeals substances like ice. When circulation is decreased, Moxibustion is applied. The essential oils of Moxa are soaked through the skin and through the cell membranes, while the heat of burning the herb opens up the pore, similarly to how you absorb vitamin D from the sun. Moxa can be burned directly on the skin, on the end of a needle or waved over a large area when rolled up like a cigar. Moxa is very relaxing, but can be contraindicated for people sensitive to smoke.

**Auricular or Ear Acupuncture** Auricular can be used all on its own or combined with acupuncture. Through the ear runs the vagus nerve, which is the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve. It originates in the medulla oblongata,

## What on Earth is Cupping?

which is responsible for roles such as respiratory and cardiac functions, as well as involuntary actions of the body. The vagus nerve branches to a large part of the body and when stimulated it sends a signal back to the medulla, signaling change. This nerve can be stimulated with small needles, a laser or a seed or pellet made of gold or silver. The ear has been mapped out to show precisely the area of the lobe and outer ear that corresponds to the branch it feeds off to. If the lowest part of the ear, for example, is needled, this corresponds with the head or eyes. If the top of the ear is needled, it corresponds with the hands and feet. This is great, because if someone has an injury to an area that cannot be needled, we treat it through the ear, which stimulates the vagus nerve branch that goes to that area, signaling the brain to heal it.

There are many more modalities, but these are the most commonly used ones. Adding a modality to an acupuncture treatment is a great way to complete this ancient therapy and send you home with a noticeable difference. Some therapies are contraindicated for certain people or conditions, but a Chinese medical practitioner can always assess which one works best for you and your condition. Chuck Page once wrote about mutual enhancement: “a single leaf working alone provides no shade.”