



# The Use of Acupuncture in Sports Injury and Prevention



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## Opinion

Its spring time and we are ready to go out with enthusiasm to hike, ski, bike, golf or play tennis. Muscles tight from under or over use can easily cause injury. Acute muscle or tendon sprains and strains are common and can be healed quite quickly with acupuncture therapy. Acupuncture is an energy medicine based on the 3 thousand year old philosophy that energy flows in specific pathways or conduits. Specific places (acupuncture points) in the muscle tissue have more electrical activity and trigger the body to respond and accelerate healing. Swelling and inflammation decrease, circulation increases, and voila! The body's healing mechanism kicks in and the muscles are back to their normal state. When these electrical currents that flow through us are strong and connected we feel flexible and great. Chi ("Chee", also spelled qi) is a Chinese term that means energy connected to the larger intelligence of life and our body's own healing mechanisms. All body systems such as the muscular, skeletal, endocrine, immune, digestive, respiratory, nervous, circulatory are connected through an energetic series of complex biochemical communications. This is the inherent intelligence of our life force, chi Pain is considered a block or stagnation of chi in the electrical currents or meridians.

The circuit of chi in the meridians is like a blueprint of life force. When there is an injury from overuse, say tennis or golf 'elbow' the muscle-nerve communication becomes disrupted or imbalanced

and inflammation sets in. Acupuncture retrains this communication by directing energy back into the meridians which stops swelling and inflammation. Acupuncture and herbs can also treat allergies, asthma, headaches, menstrual and menopausal disorders, back pain and sports injuries. Acupuncture is a thoroughly relaxing experience. The practitioner takes your pulse, looks at your tongue to get more of an idea of how your energy and circulation are flowing. A treatment strategy is developed and your job is just to lie down, relax and do nothing. The points take over, endorphins release and everything lets go. Soon your energy is uplifted and the symptoms subside.

Chinese medicine includes acupuncture, herbs, a massage called tui na, and chi exercise (Chi Gong/Qi Gong or tai chi). This philosophy and science is based on balance and the wisdom of prevention. Yin and yang, Yin is rest while yang is action. Using the theory of balance we maintain good health. For example, before any exercise – stretch and breathe. Warming up the muscles brings more blood and allows greater flexibility. Breathing oxygenates and focuses the mind. It's easy to injure yourself if your mind is somewhere else! If you love to play golf or tennis, just do it, but also walk, run, swim or dance. Let other muscle groups have a chance to catch up and balance the flow of energy circulating in your body. From the yang activity of rigorous exercise to the yin of relaxation and breath, stay balanced, healthy and enjoy!



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