

# Welcome to the Monthly Care Plan



## Ki Acupuncture

### Welcome to the Monthly Care Plan

Thank you for joining the Ki Acupuncture *Monthly Care Plan* – I'm thrilled to have you on board!

This plan is designed for clients who want consistent, ongoing support for their health at a much more accessible cost. Regular acupuncture and therapeutic massage can play a powerful role in maintaining wellbeing, regulating the nervous system, supporting chronic conditions, and helping your body stay balanced over time.

*“The best medicine prevents illness before it takes hold.”*

By joining the plan, you are making a commitment to your long-term health. In return, you receive access to significantly reduced treatment rates so that regular care becomes sustainable.

#### Nourishing life

I believe healthcare should be affordable and inclusive. It should also help people develop the knowledge and habits that support their own wellbeing. Alongside treatment, I encourage simple routines and

self-care practices that help support balance, rest, and resilience in everyday life.

This reflects the Chinese medicine idea of yangsheng, or “nourishing life”, through practices such as acupuncture, massage, qigong, and supportive daily habits. In practice, this means creating the conditions that allow the body and mind to function at their best, through small, consistent routines that support long-term health.

#### Collaboration, consistency, flexibility

Ongoing care works best as a collaborative process. Your treatments will continue to evolve as your needs change, and you are always welcome to bring up anything you would like to focus on. Because Chinese medicine works holistically, that might include physical symptoms, sleep, energy levels, stress, anxiety, digestion, cycle regulation, recovery from exercise – or simply the need for some time to let your nervous system unwind and restore.

*“The body thrives on rhythm, rest, and regularity.”*

Many members find that coming regularly helps to maintain progress and prevent issues from building up again – or just provides a much-needed oasis of dedicated time to rest and reset.

Some prefer to attend weekly or fortnightly to get the most out of their membership. Others come monthly for maintenance.

The more often you come, the more value you get from your subscription. The plan gives you the flexibility to choose a rhythm that suits your life.



#### Your Monthly Membership

Your membership costs £20 per month. Payments are debited by Stripe on the same date each month. While your membership is active, you receive 60% off all treatments, no matter how often you attend.

Your membership also means you have a personal practitioner who is familiar with your health and available to support you over time, should you ever want to discuss changes, concerns, or questions along the way.

Sessions are booked and paid for individually at the reduced member rates shown below. You can pay by cash, card, PayPal, direct transfer, or via the website payment portal. Because the discount is applied as a percentage, longer sessions offer particularly good value.

## Membership Treatment Prices



**Acupuncture (50 minutes)**

**Member price: £20**

*Standard price: £50*



**Long tuina or Swedish massage (45 minutes)**

**Member price: £22**

*Standard price: £55*



**Acupuncture & tuina or Swedish massage (80 minutes)**

**Member price: £30**

*Standard price: £75*



**Full-body Swedish massage (80 minutes)**

**Member price: £34**

*Standard price: £85*



**Acupuncture & full-body Swedish massage (110 minutes)**

**Member price: £50**

*Standard price: £125*



**Reflexology & Indian head massage (1 hour)**

**Member price: £28**

*Standard price: £70*



**Short tuina or bodyweight massage (30 minutes)**

**Member price: £16**

*Standard price: £40*



**Indian head massage or reflexology (30 minutes)**

**Member price: £16**

*Standard price: £40*



## Choosing Your Treatments

One of the advantages of the plan is that you can tailor your sessions to what you need at the time.

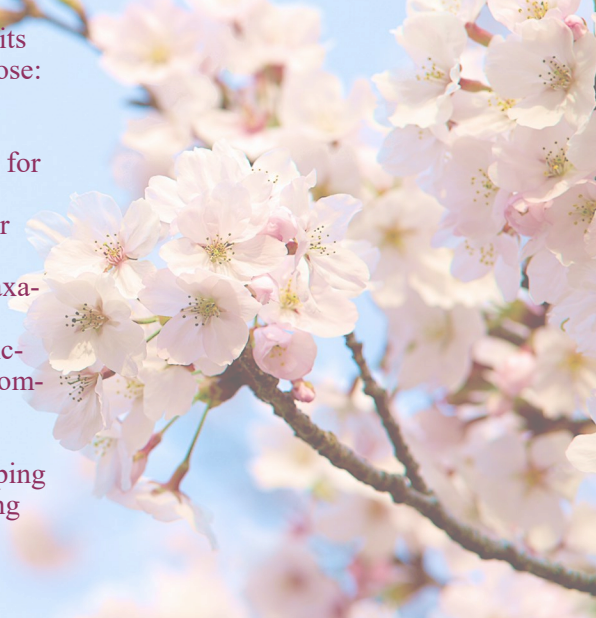
Some members prefer a consistent approach and come for the same treatment each visit. Others vary their sessions depending on what their body is currently needing. Still others create a set schedule of alternating sessions.

I encourage you to explore the different

options and find a combination that suits you best. For example, you might choose:

- acupuncture for a focused treatment
- acupuncture combined with massage for deeper therapeutic work
- a targeted tuina massage for muscular tension
- a full-body Swedish massage for relaxation and nervous system regulation
- a longer combined session of acupuncture and full-body massage for more comprehensive care

Complementary therapies such as cupping and gua sha may be incorporated during treatments if they feel helpful for you.





breathwork to support your wellbeing between treatments.

Just ask if you would like to explore these as part of your treatment plan. And if you have any questions or suggestions at all, I'm always keen to hear them!

## Getting the Most from the Plan

The *Monthly Care Plan* is designed for people who want to prioritise consistent care. A few simple habits help you gain the greatest benefit:

- Attend regularly so treatments can build on each other – your nervous system feels reassured by predictable rhythms!
- Let me know about any changes in your health or lifestyle – my aim is personalised, one-to-one care that adapts to you.
- Use sessions both for addressing specific concerns and for maintaining general calm and wellbeing – care can be both restorative and preventive, as well as therapeutic and targeted.
- To ensure you can continue attending at the times that suit you best, it's a good idea to keep a few sessions booked ahead and simply add the next one as you go – many members find that keeping appointments rolling forward helps maintain consistency and ensures their preferred slots remain available.

*"Small, consistent habits make the biggest difference to long-term wellbeing."*

## Stay in touch!

As a valued member of the plan, your care doesn't begin and end in the clinic room. If anything changes with your health, or you simply want to share pro-

gress or ask a question, you are always welcome to get in touch – I'm always genuinely happy to hear from you!

You can reach me via:

- Phone / WhatsApp: 01274 003 008
- Email: [richard@ki-acupuncture.co.uk](mailto:richard@ki-acupuncture.co.uk)
- Website contact form: <https://ki-acupuncture.co.uk/contact/>
- Social media: @kiacupunc

And while I don't send newsletters or marketing emails, I do share a growing collection of articles on East Asian medicine and general health and wellbeing on my website's blog: <https://ki-acupuncture.co.uk/blog/>... Feel free to dive in!

## A Few Key Points

- There is a minimum commitment of three consecutive months – although I hope you will feel the benefits and stay much longer!
- Membership payments must remain continuous for discounted rates to apply – you can't pause your subscription and then recommence.
- The plan is non-transferable and non-refundable. Places are limited.
- The plan is available for self-funding clients only and does not apply to treatments claimed through private or workplace health insurance schemes, so I can't offer receipts for this purpose.

## Cancellation policy

Where possible, please let me know well in advance if you need to rearrange an appointment. This gives me the opportunity to offer that time to another client.

A £15 short-notice fee applies to appointments cancelled with less than 48 hours' notice. Appointments cancelled on the day may be charged at the discounted session rate, as the time cannot usually be offered to someone else at such short notice. Exceptions may of course be made in cases of sudden illness, accident, bereavement, or a serious family emergency.

## Massage options

In addition to Chinese tuina and Swedish massage, I offer a range of massage techniques that can be integrated to suit your preferences and needs. These might include:

- Acupressure and shunjing (gentle channel brushing) to open the meridians
- Bodyweight massage for deeper pressure and grounding
- Myofascial and neuromuscular release techniques for slow fascial unwinding
- PNF stretching and tendon release to ease restriction and improve mobility
- Lymphatic drainage or abdominal massage to support circulation and digestion
- Reflexology or Indian head and facial massage for soothing and calming

Each session can be tailored as you prefer, so feel free to ask if there's something you're curious to explore.

## Movement practices

I also offer private qigong and yoga sessions. These practices can complement hands-on treatments by supporting breathing, circulation, balance, strength and mobility, body awareness, and a calmer, more regulated nervous system.

They can also help you develop a simple and sustainable home routine of movement, acupressure, meditation, and



# Rough Guide to Chinese Medicine

Chinese medicine offers a different way of understanding health. This guide explores the principles behind acupuncture, how diagnosis works, and how treatment influences the body's natural regulatory systems. We'll also touch briefly on food energetics, movement practices like qigong, bodywork therapies like tuina, and yangsheng lifestyle choices.



## 氣 A Different Way of Looking at Health

Chinese medicine grew out of centuries of careful observation of the body in health, illness, and recovery. Rather than focusing only on isolated symptoms, it looks for patterns in the way different systems interact.

This means that when someone comes for treatment with a particular problem, the conversation often ranges wider than expected. A migraine might lead us to talk about digestion, sleep, stress, menstrual cycles, energy levels, or emotional strain.

*“The aim is not simply to suppress symptoms, but to restore the body’s ability to regulate itself.”*

Symptoms are not independent of one another. Tension in the neck may appear during a period of emotional pressure; digestive problems can influence energy and concentration; poor sleep often changes how we experience pain. Chinese medicine developed a language for describing these connections. The aim is not simply to label a complaint but to understand the wider internal environment that allowed it to appear.

One of the traditional expressions of this idea is the distinction between the “root” and the “branch” of a condition. The branch is the symptom that brings someone to clinic. The root refers to the broader pattern within the body that made the symptom more likely to arise. Both are important – local treatment can often ease the immediate discomfort, whereas looking at the wider pattern helps reduce the chances of the same problem returning again and again.

## 氣 Yin and Yang: A Simple Map of Balance

One of the oldest ideas used to describe balance in Chinese medicine is the concept of yin and yang. These terms, derived from Daoist philosophy, are sometimes presented in an abstract way, although in practice they simply describe complementary aspects of how living systems work.

They are not absolute states. Instead, we can think of them as a shorthand for paired qualities that exist in dynamic relationship with one another. They relate to each other in several fundamental ways: they are interdependent, continually wax and wane, transform into one another, and maintain a dynamic balance.

*“The language of yin and yang gives Chinese medicine a simple way to talk about shifting relationships.”*

Activity and rest are a familiar example of a yin-yang pairing, with activity being yang and rest being yin. The body spends energy during periods of action and replenishes itself during sleep and recovery. Warmth and cooling work in a similar way. Circulation generates heat, while fluid balance and metabolic processes help regulate it.

Movement and nourishment form another pair. Muscles contract and relax, blood circulates, breath moves through the lungs, digestion transforms food into usable energy. Alongside these active yang processes, tissues also need relatively yin periods of restoration and repair.

Health depends on these rhythms remaining responsive. When one side of the balance becomes excessive or depleted, the system begins to drift out of alignment. Sleep may become lighter, digestion less efficient, muscles more tense, or emotions more reactive. The language of yin and yang gives Chinese medicine a simple way to talk about these shifting relationships without reducing them to a single isolated mechanism.



## Patterns Rather Than Disease Labels

Because Chinese medicine pays attention to the overall picture of a person's health, it tends to describe imbalance slightly differently from modern diagnostic systems. A helpful framework for this is known as the Eight Principles. These principles offer a way of organising symptoms into broader tendencies.

Some patterns involve heat, where the body becomes restless, inflamed, or overheated. Others show signs of cold, where circulation slows and tissues feel stiff or contracted. Conditions may involve excess, where activity in the system has become too intense or constrained, or deficiency, where something essential has become depleted. Another distinction is between internal and external influences, referring to whether the imbalance arises primarily within the body's internal regulation or from environmental factors.

The final pair is yin and yang, which describe the fundamental polarity of the pattern rather than simply its location, temperature, or strength. For example, a person with yin deficiency may show signs of heat such as night sweats or restlessness, yet the underlying disorder is still considered yin because the heat arises from a lack of yin (cooling) rather than an excess of yang. Taken together, these ideas help describe underlying patterns rather than symptomatic diseases.

*“Chinese medicine looks for patterns in how the body behaves, rather than treating each symptom in isolation.”*

A headache offers a simple illustration. In one person it may arise during periods of emotional tension and manifest from tight neck muscles. In another it may appear alongside digestive sluggishness and a heavy sensation in the head. A third person might develop headaches when they are exhausted and have been sleeping poorly for weeks. A fourth person might experience headaches associated with hormonal changes, particularly when the body feels run down or under-resourced.

Each of these situations looks different from a Chinese medicine perspective, involving different channels and organ systems, even though the symptom itself is similar. Treatment therefore focuses on restoring balance within the underlying pattern rather than suppressing the symptom alone. It may not always offer the immediate relief of a pharmaceutical, as longstanding tendencies can take time to

change, but over time it is an effective way to shift the underlying imbalances that give rise to the symptom.



## The Organ Systems: More Than Anatomy

Chinese medicine describes the body through an interrelated group of functional systems traditionally referred to as the organ systems, or zangfu. These names overlap with familiar anatomical organs, though their meaning is broader. Each system represents a cluster of distributed physiological processes rather than a single physical structure.

The Liver system, for example, relates to the smooth circulation of qi through the body. When this function is working well, movement feels easy and emotions adapt flexibly to changing circumstances. When it becomes constrained, people may notice muscular tension, irritability, headaches, or a feeling of pressure building internally.

The Spleen system is closely connected with digestion and the transformation of food into usable nourishment. When this system is under strain, energy may feel low, concentration may become difficult, rumination and worry can worsen, and digestion can feel heavy or sluggish.

The Heart system relates to circulation as well as mental clarity and emotional steadiness. Disturbances here may show up through sleep disruption, restlessness, or an unsettled state of mind.

The Kidney system is traditionally associated with our deeper reserves of vitality, known as Essence or Jing. It relates to growth, development, reproduction, resilience, and the body's capacity to recover from long periods of strain.

Other systems such as the Lungs also play an important role, linking breath, immune regulation, and the body's interaction with the external environment. When the zang organs of Liver, Spleen, Heart, Kidneys, and Lungs are working harmoniously, we tend to experience a sense of ease and direction, clarity and focus, calm and connection, resilience and stability, and openness and vitality.

*“Chinese medicine offers a broader, more relational view of the body, focusing on patterns and balance.”*

Alongside the zang are their paired fu, which are more directly involved in the processing of food, fluids, and waste. These systems support digestion, absorption, and elimination, working in a more active way to keep things moving and maintain internal balance.

One feature that often surprises people is that these organ systems include emotional dimensions as well as physical ones. Chinese medicine has long recognised that emotional states and physiological processes influence one another closely. Stress can tighten muscles and disturb digestion. Poor sleep can make emotional responses sharper, and pain more pronounced. A long illness can alter mood and motivation.

Rather than separating body and mind into completely different categories, the traditional zangfu describe how these experiences interact within a single living system. Mind, body, and emotion may be useful as separate conceptual terms, but in reality they are fundamentally inseparable.

This way of describing the body comes from a long clinical tradition and remains highly useful in practice, but it is best understood as a framework for observing and working pragmatically with patterns in the body, rather than a literal description of a separate “energy system”. Chinese medicine offers a broader, more relational view of the body, focusing on patterns and balance rather than the detailed molecular mechanisms and structural explanations used in modern biomedicine.



# 氣 Qi, Blood, and Fluids

Within this framework, Chinese medicine describes several fundamental substances that support the body's internal environment. The most widely known of these is qi, which can be roughly translated as energy.

In everyday Chinese language the word simply refers to activity or vitality. In medicine it points toward the dynamic processes that allow the body to function efficiently. Breathing, circulation, digestion, nerve signalling, and the ability to respond to changing conditions all fall within this same idea. These functions are described by different kinds of qi depending on the role they play in the body.

Qi is categorised as a fundamental “substance” in Chinese medicine, but really it refers to the quality of movement and transformation within the body rather than a mysterious extra material flowing through us – it is energy in the sense of biological processes or overall dynamics. In its original context, qi is a broad and practical term used to describe function, activity, and change in the body, much as we might talk about systems in modern physiology, rather than a separate substance or hidden force.

*“Qi refers to the quality of movement and transformation within the body.”*

Alongside qi sits blood, or xue. A famous classical saying states that “qi is the commander of blood, and blood the mother of qi”. This means that qi moves blood while blood nourishes and carries qi, reflecting the idea that healthy circulation depends on both movement and adequate nourishment, and that problems can arise when either is lacking.

Blood represents nourishment and stability. It carries oxygen and nutrients, supports tissues, and contributes to the steadiness of our mental and emotional state. It also houses the Shen, or spirit, so disturbed sleep is often treated by nourishing blood as well as calming the mind, allowing the Shen to settle and rest.

Chinese medicine also recognises a group of substances often referred to as body fluids. These include the various liquids that lubricate joints, moisten tissues, cool the body, and maintain flexibility throughout our internal environment. These are closely associated with what is described as yin: the nourishing and cooling aspect of the body, while yang reflects the under-

lying warmth and vitality that support activity, metabolism, and transformation.

Health depends on these substances circulating and interacting in a balanced way. If movement becomes restricted, we may experience tension or discomfort. If nourishment becomes depleted, fatigue and dryness may appear. When the balance between warming and cooling processes shifts, symptoms such as inflammation or sluggishness can develop.

These ideas provide another way of describing how the body organises and regulates itself. The language may be traditional, though the observations behind it reflect everyday physiological experience.

## 氣 Channels: Pathways of Communication

Acupuncture works through a network of informational pathways traditionally known as the channel (or meridian) system. There are twelve primary acupuncture channels – which might be likened to the main energetic rivers of the body – that guide the flow of qi, and eight extraordinary vessels, which act like reservoirs. These are supported by smaller branching networks, including the Luo-connecting channels, which further link, balance, and refine the communication between systems.



These pathways link organs, tissues, muscles, and the surface of the body into a coordinated whole. The classical texts describe them as routes through which qi and blood circulate, connecting different regions so that the body can regulate itself as a single system.

This idea reflects something we experience every day. Tension in the shoulders can influence the head. Digestive discomfort or emotional distress can change our posture and breathing. An ankle injury may alter the way the hip and lower back move. The body does not operate in isolated compartments.

The channel maps offer a way of understanding these connections. Each channel traces a pathway through the body, linking internal systems with specific areas of muscle, fascia, and skin. Points along these routes can influence both local tis-

sue and more distant regions connected by the same pathway.

*“The channels are functional pathways linking structure, sensation, and physical and emotional regulation.”*

Modern research has begun exploring possible physiological parallels. The connective tissue network known as fascia wraps muscle and organs, penetrates tissues in a complex tensile web, and forms continuous planes throughout the body that are rich in sensory nerves monitoring pressure, movement, and tension.

Signals from these tissues constantly travel through the nervous system, informing the brain about the body's internal state. When acupuncture needles stimulate points along a channel, they appear to interact with these sensory networks and influence how the nervous system interprets information from the body.

Interestingly, these classical relationships correlate closely to both fascial planes and the development of germ layers as described by modern embryology. Structures that end up separated by distance in the adult body share developmental origins, suggesting that acupuncture may be influencing a very deeply embedded physiological map. For example, the respiratory tract and the digestive tract both arise from the endoderm, and these are closely linked in Chinese medicine by the related Taiyin channels of Lung and Spleen.

Functional movement patterns and load distribution, as well as neurovascular, immunological, and autonomic pathways, may all be described by the channel network. While there is no one-to-one correlation, the channels can be understood as a clinical framework that integrates these systems into a single functional picture.

The classical channel model is simple compared with our modern biomedical understanding of the body, but it remains clinically useful because it accurately reflects patterns practitioners repeatedly observe in practice. In many ways, its simplicity is a strength, allowing complex physiological processes to be described in an integrated and coherent way. Pain often travels along recognisable routes. Stimulation in one region can influence another area some distance away.

The maps recorded in early Chinese medicine captured these relationships long before modern anatomy had language for them. Channels are therefore best understood as functional pathways linking structure, sensation, and physical and emotional regulation.



## Internal Climate and Pathogenic Factors

Chinese medicine often describes imbalance using language borrowed from the natural world. Terms such as heat, cold, dampness, and wind appear frequently in diagnosis. These words are not meant literally. They are metaphors describing patterns in the way the body behaves.

Heat patterns may involve inflammation, irritability, restlessness, or a flushed sensation. Cold patterns tend to involve contraction, stiffness, and slowed circulation. Dampness suggests heaviness, congestion, or a feeling of sluggishness in digestion or the limbs. Wind is used to describe symptoms that move suddenly or unpredictably, such as spasms, dizziness, or headaches that shift location.

This language developed because early physicians noticed that groups of symptoms tended to cluster together in recognisable ways. A person experiencing inflammatory skin irritation might also feel hot, thirsty, and restless. Someone with cold digestive weakness might prefer warmth and feel worse in damp weather.

Describing these patterns as forms of internal climate provides a shorthand for understanding how symptoms relate to one another. The aim of treatment is not to eliminate this “weather” from the body but to help restore a stable internal environment in which physiological processes can function smoothly.



## How Diagnosis Works in Practice

During a consultation, a Chinese medicine practitioner gathers information from several sources. Conversation forms an important part of this process. Symptoms, sleep patterns, appetite, digestion, temperature preferences, emotional state, and daily habits all provide clues about how the body is functioning. Observation also plays a role. Practitioners traditionally pay

attention to posture, complexion, voice, breathing patterns, and general demeanour.

Two methods often attract curiosity from clients: pulse and tongue examination. The tongue offers a surprisingly rich snapshot of internal physiology. Practitioners look at aspects such as colour, coating, moisture, and shape. A pale tongue may suggest reduced circulation or nourishment. A thick coating can reflect digestive stagnation. Swelling, cracks, or dryness provide further hints about how different systems are functioning.

Pulse examination works in a similar way. Rather than simply measuring heart rate, Chinese medicine assesses qualities such as depth, strength, rhythm, and quality of the pulse at several positions on the wrist, which each relate to an organ network and reflect its qi, blood, and organ health. Where the tongue shows long-term tendencies, the pulse reflects the more immediate state of the body.

Another method sometimes used is abdominal palpation, known in Japanese practice as *hara* diagnosis. Gentle pressure across different areas of the abdomen can reveal regions of tension, softness, temperature change, or sensitivity that correspond with particular patterns.

None of these observations stand alone. Each forms part of a broader picture built through conversation, touch, and clinical experience. With practice, the diagnostic process can appear very intuitive. What may seem like a subtle or even hidden perception is sometimes described in terms of qi, but it is really the result of many small observations: changes in tissue quality and tone, the rhythm of breathing, the way someone moves and speaks, and the overall coherence of their presentation.



## How We Choose Acupuncture Points

Once the patterns begin to emerge, the practitioner selects points that help guide the body back toward balance. This process draws on several overlapping frame-

works. Sometimes points are chosen because they lie along a channel associated with the affected area. At other times a practitioner may select a point on the opposite limb that mirrors the problem region.

Certain points are traditionally linked with particular physiological effects, such as supporting digestion, calming agitation, or improving circulation, and most can be employed with different intentions depending on the client's particular presentation. Classical systems such as the Five Phases, the Six Divisions, the Extraordinary Vessels, and various ways of categorising points all offer additional means of arriving at a needle prescription.

Some practitioners also draw on more modern approaches that combine traditional theory with contemporary knowledge of neurology and pain physiology. Many acupuncture points overlap with motor points, trigger points, and areas of dense innervation, which helps explain some of their clinical effects through a biomedical lens.

Treatment style varies depending on the situation. Musculoskeletal pain may involve several local points around the affected region alongside points further away that influence the same channel or a related one.

Someone experiencing anxiety, fatigue, or sleep disturbance may receive a smaller number of points chosen for their regulatory effect on the nervous system. Usually, a simple, clear, intentional signal is more effective than an elaborate or scattergun approach.

Age, constitution, and sensitivity also shape the approach. Some people respond best to a very gentle treatment with only a few needles, while others benefit from a more intensive prescription with greater needle manipulation.

The goal is always the same: encouraging the body's own regulatory systems to settle back into a more balanced rhythm.

# 氣 Different Traditions of Acupuncture

Acupuncture has developed through many cultural and historical layers. Classical Chinese medicine forms the foundation, though the practice has continued evolving across different regions and periods.

In the twentieth century, the system referred to as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) standardised many diagnostic and teaching methods. Even within TCM there is great variation: some practitioners might emphasise Five Phase relationships, others zangfu pattern diagnosis, and still others channel palpation or balance methods.

At the same time, other traditions developed their own distinctive styles. Japanese acupuncture, for example, emphasises extremely gentle needling and refined palpation techniques. Korean approaches such as Saam acupuncture use Five Phase relationships to balance organ systems, often using a small number of distal points.

*“All styles draw on the same core ideas: observing patterns, influencing the body’s regulatory networks, and supporting the smooth circulation of qi and blood.”*

Contemporary practitioners may also incorporate methods such as electroacupuncture, holographic styles like abdominal or auricular acupuncture, or scalp systems such as Yamamoto scalp acupuncture. Manual therapeutic methods like shunjing (channel brushing), tuina (Chinese massage), cupping, and acupres-

sure can be incorporated to good effect, too, either to supplement acupuncture or as standalone therapies.

These variations reflect differences in emphasis rather than completely separate medicines. All draw on the same core ideas: observing patterns, influencing the body’s regulatory networks, and supporting the smooth circulation of qi and blood through the channel system. Despite its long history, acupuncture does not stand still; its essential principles remain rooted in tradition, yet it continues to adapt as new clinical insights and scientific research emerge.

## 氣 Food Energetics and Seasonal Balance

Diet is another area where Chinese medicine uses a slightly different framework from modern nutritional science. Rather than focusing only on calories or individual nutrients, traditional practitioners consider the energetic qualities of food and how these interact with the body’s internal climate.

Foods are described in terms of their temperature, flavour, and general effect on the body. Temperature in this context does not refer to whether something is served hot or cold, but to the overall tendency of the food once it is digested. Some foods are considered warming, gently stimulating circulation and digestion. Others are cooling and help settle internal heat or inflammation. Many fall somewhere in the middle and are regarded as neutral and broadly nourishing.

Classical texts describe five main flavours – sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and salty –

each associated with particular organ systems, phases (or elements), and seasonal qualities. Sweet foods are traditionally linked with nourishment and digestion, with the earth phase, late summer, and the Spleen.

Sour flavours (linked with wood, spring, and the Liver) can have a mildly astringent effect, helping to contain fluids and energy. Bitter flavours (fire, early summer, and the Heart and Pericardium) often clear heat and dryness, while pungent foods (metal, autumn, and the Lungs) encourage movement and circulation. Salty foods (water, winter, and the Kidneys) soften, descend, and nourish.

These ideas were never intended as rigid dietary rules. They provide a way of thinking about how food influences our physiology. In practice, dietary guidance tends to focus on very simple principles. Regular meals, warm and easily digested foods, and attention to how the body responds are usually more important than strict prescriptions. Many people notice that digestion feels stronger when meals are eaten calmly and at predictable times.

We can also consider seasonality. In colder months the body often benefits from warmer, more substantial foods. During summer, lighter meals and greater hydration usually feel more natural. These shifts mirror the same yin–yang rhythms that influence sleep, energy, and activity throughout the year.





# How Acupuncture Influences the Body

Improvements in heart rate variability and vagal activity have been observed in some studies, suggesting a more settled physiological baseline.

system. This may help explain why acupuncture sometimes influences sleep, stress physiology, mood, energy levels, and reproductive cycles.

Modern research suggests acupuncture influences several overlapping physiological systems rather than acting through a single mechanism. Instead of working like a simple chemical switch, treatment appears to create a small but precise sensory signal that interacts with the nervous system, circulation, connective tissue, immune responses, and the brain's interpretation of sensation.

When a needle is inserted, receptors in the skin, fascia, connective tissue, and muscle are stimulated. These receptors send signals through sensory nerve fibres to the spinal cord and brain, where they begin influencing several regulatory networks within the body.

One of the most widely studied effects relates to pain modulation. Acupuncture appears to influence the body's own pain-regulating chemistry, including endorphins, enkephalins, serotonin, noradrenaline, and adenosine. It can also affect the descending inhibitory pathways in the brain and spinal cord that help turn down excessive pain signalling and mechanisms linked with both peripheral and central sensitisation.

In chronic pain conditions these systems often become less effective, and acupuncture may help restore some of their regulatory activity. The evidence base is strong here, and as such the NICE guidelines include acupuncture as a recommended treatment for chronic primary pain.

Treatment can also influence the autonomic nervous system, which regulates many automatic functions such as heart rate, digestion, and stress responses. Many people notice a sense of calm or deep relaxation during or after treatment. This may reflect a shift away from persistent fight-or-flight activation and toward a more restorative parasympathetic state.

At a local level, needling can increase circulation and microvascular activity in the surrounding tissues. Improved blood flow supports oxygen delivery, tissue repair, and the removal of inflammatory by-products that contribute to pain and muscular tension. Research suggests that acupuncture can also promote the local release of adenosine – a neuromodulator that helps reduce pain by inhibiting inflammatory pathways and enhancing tissue relaxation.

*“Acupuncture works less like a single chemical switch and more like a regulatory influence across several systems in the body.”*

Acupuncture interacts with the body's connective tissue network, too – particularly fascia, mentioned earlier. This tissue forms a continuous web throughout the body and is rich in sensory receptors and responsive cells such as fibroblasts. Mechanical stimulation from a needle can alter tension within these tissues and trigger biochemical signalling processes, sometimes described as mechanotransduction. Some researchers believe these connective tissue pathways may help explain aspects of the classical channel system described in Chinese medicine.

Changes in immune and inflammatory signalling have also been observed. Acupuncture appears to influence inflammatory mediators and immune responses both locally and more systemically. In chronic pain conditions it may also interact with glial cells and neuroinflammatory processes within the central nervous system.

Because the nervous system regulates hormonal activity through the hypothalamus and pituitary, these broader regulatory effects can extend into the endocrine

Imaging studies suggest that acupuncture can also influence brain networks involved in sensation, pain processing, emotional regulation, and interoceptive awareness – the brain's ability to sense and interpret signals from within the body. In chronic pain states the nervous system can become overly sensitive to threat signals, effectively turning up the volume on discomfort. Acupuncture may help recalibrate these networks and reduce this amplification.

As with all medical interventions, placebo effects related to meaning, expectation, and the therapeutic relationship can have a real and measurable influence on outcomes, too, reflecting the close relationship between mind, brain, and body. This does not diminish the physiological effects of treatment but highlights the role of context in how the body responds.

Taken together, these findings suggest acupuncture works less like a single chemical trigger and more like a homeostatic and regulatory intervention across several interconnected systems. By influencing sensory signalling, circulation, connective tissue, immune responses, and brain processing, treatment may help the body recover a more stable internal balance.

In traditional language, this regulatory process is described as restoring the smooth circulation of qi and blood through the channels. When channel theory evolved more than two thousand years ago our understanding of physiology lacked the detail we have now.

Yet the simple elegance of qi theory succinctly describes this complex web of interacting systems and processes. The terminology may differ, but both ancient and modern perspectives point toward the same underlying idea: helping the body regain its capacity to regulate itself.





# What Acupuncture Is Commonly Used For

*“Regular treatment can help maintain stable energy, improve recovery from stress, and keep smaller imbalances from accumulating.”*

People seek acupuncture for many different reasons. Some come with specific physical complaints, while others are looking for broader support with stress, sleep, or long-term health conditions. Pain conditions are among the most common. These include issues such as back pain, neck tension, headaches and migraines, arthritis, sports injuries, nerve irritation, and muscular strain.

Acupuncture is also frequently used to support sleep and emotional wellbeing. Many people find treatment helpful when dealing with anxiety, fatigue, persistent stress, burnout, or difficulty switching off at night. Conditions that flare with stress such as certain kinds of dermatitis can calm considerably with treatment.

Stress can worsen many health conditions by driving chronic inflammation, disrupting hormonal balance, impairing digestion, and suppressing aspects of immune function; by helping regulate the nervous system and reduce inflammatory signaling, acupuncture may therefore ease some of these physiological effects of stress and support the body's ability to recover and maintain balance.

Digestive issues can often arise from stress, too, along with dietary choices, irregular eating habits, poor sleep, illness, medication use, and ongoing lifestyle pressures that disrupt the normal balance and function of the digestive system. Problems such as bloating, sluggish digestion, blood sugar imbalance, or irregular bowel movements often respond well when treatment focuses on calming the emotions and restoring balance within the digestive tract and related enteric nervous system.

Women's health is an area where acupuncture has long been used. Treatments may support menstrual regulation, fertility, pregnancy care, and the transition through menopause. In Chinese medicine terms, this often involves supporting the systems that regulate blood, cycles, and emotional balance – particularly the Liver, Spleen, and Kidneys.

Other people attend primarily for general regulation and preventive care. Rather than waiting until symptoms become severe, regular treatment can help maintain stable energy, improve recovery from stress, and keep smaller imbalances from accumulating. Because acupuncture works through systemic patterns rather than single disease labels, the same treatment may influence several aspects of health at once.



## Prevention and Yangsheng

The broader philosophy behind these ideas is often described using the term yangsheng, usually translated as “nourishing life”. In classical Chinese medicine, healthcare was not limited to treating illness after it appeared. Equal emphasis was placed on cultivating habits that allowed the body to remain resilient in the first place.

Many of these principles are simple and familiar. Regular sleep, balanced activity and rest, nourishing food, healthy social contact, and time outdoors all support the body's internal rhythms.

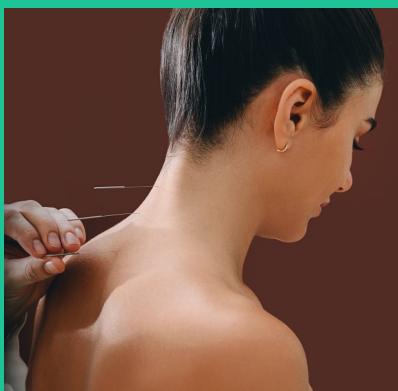
Gentle movement practices also play an important role. Practices such as qigong and neigong were developed to cultivate awareness of posture, breath, and internal sensation. Through slow and intentional movement, mindful stillness, and cultivation of a calm and focused mindset, these exercises help improve strength and circulation, breathing patterns, balance and coordination, and the body's ability to slow down, relax, and recover.

*“Health is not simply the absence of symptoms; it is the steady cultivation of balance and vitality.”*

Hands-on therapies also form part of this tradition. Techniques such as tuina massage, acupressure, and other forms of therapeutic bodywork work with the same channel pathways used in acupuncture. By influencing muscles, connective tissue, and circulation, they support the body's ability to unwind accumulated tension, restore comfortable movement, and feel more peaceful, spacious, centred, and nourished.

These approaches complement one another. Acupuncture can help reset patterns within the nervous and circulatory systems, while movement and manual therapies reinforce those changes through everyday activity. Over time, many people find that consistent care combined with supportive habits creates a steadier foundation for health. In this way, health can be something to be cultivated and enjoyed, rather than something defined only by the absence of symptoms.





## 氣 Ongoing Care That Supports You

The *Monthly Care Plan* is about making regular, personalised care affordable and sustainable. By attending consistently, treatments can build on each other and support your health in a deeper and more lasting way.

In Chinese medicine, this approach to health is reflected in the notion of yang-sheng (“nourishing life”) that we touched on earlier.

Alongside treatments such as acupuncture and massage, this can include consistent daily habits that help restore balance over time – things like mindful, low-intensity movement, supportive diet, good sleep

rhythms, early morning light, emotional balance, time outdoors, meditation and breathwork, and meaningful social connection.

*“When the body feels safe, healing becomes possible.”*

Often it is the small, steady adjustments that make the greatest difference. Habituation beats willpower and intensity. When the body is supported with regular care, healthy routines, and space to rest and reset, many people find physical symptoms ease and emotional patterns begin to shift as well.

### No pressure!

Everyone engages with these ideas in their own way. Some people enjoy exploring

practices like qigong, tai chi, and breathwork, or trying dietary adjustments, while others simply value the regular time to relax and let their nervous system settle.

There is no pressure to take on more than feels right for you – these are simply tools and perspectives that are available if and when they feel useful.

*“Good health is something we build, not something we wait to lose.”*

Thank you for being part of the care plan and for putting your trust in me. It really does mean a lot.

I’m very much looking forward to supporting your health and happiness in the months ahead!

*"An oasis to rest, reset, and restore."*



# 氣 Ki Acupuncture

Traditional East Asian Medicine and Massage