

# AMC

SINCE 1910

ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER

## INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

**Integrative Medicine combines the best of conventional medicine with Complementary and Alternative modalities, such as acupuncture, chiropractic, rehabilitation and herbal medicine.**

### *What treatments are currently offered at AMC?*

- *Acupuncture* – electroacupuncture, aquapuncture, laser acu-stimulation
- *Chiropractic Treatment* – Spinal manipulation is used to restore mobility to joints restricted by tissue injury or repetitive stress
- *Physical Rehabilitation* – laser therapy, therapeutic ultrasound, neuromuscular electrical stimulation, shockwave therapy, underwater and land treadmill, pulsed electric magnetic field therapy, therapeutic whirlpool, manual therapies, myofascial trigger point release, massage, and home exercise programs
- *Natural Medicines* – Chinese herbal medicine, Western herbal medicine and homeopathy
- *Food Therapy* – dietary recommendations based on Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (TCVM)

### *What is acupuncture?*

Acupuncture is the stimulation of specific points on the body that have the ability to alter various biochemical and physiologic conditions to achieve the desired effect. It is a means of helping the body heal itself. Acupuncture has been used for nearly 4,000 years on human beings and animals. In TCVM theory, disease is an imbalance of energy in the body. Acupuncture therapy is based on balancing the energy (Yin and Yang), thereby imparting improved health and healing. It is now being utilized by an increasing number of veterinarians, alongside Western medicine, for various disease conditions.

### *How does acupuncture work?*

Acupuncture is now known to affect all major physiologic systems. It works primarily via the central nervous system, affecting the musculoskeletal, hormonal and cardiovascular systems. Acupuncture causes a release of many neurotransmitters and neurohormones, some of which are endorphins, the body's "natural pain-killing" hormones. Acupuncture also increases circulation, relieves muscle spasms, stimulates nerves and stimulates the body's defense system, among many other beneficial effects. The particular method in which it works depends on the conditions being treated and the points used. Usually more than one mechanism of action is involved when each individual acupuncture point is 'needled.'

### *What conditions respond to acupuncture?*

In the Western world, acupuncture is used primarily when medications are not working, and are contraindicated because of possible side effects or when surgery is not feasible. In small animals, acupuncture is most commonly used for musculoskeletal problems (e.g. arthritis), however, virtually any condition can be treated with TCVM, including skin problems, nervous disorders, respiratory problems, poor immunity and internal medicine conditions such as heart (cardiac) and kidney (renal) disease.

Acupuncture is not a "one-time fix," nor is it a cure-all. Some disease conditions will not respond to acupuncture; just as there are some diseases that do not respond well to conventional Western medicine. Several treatments are usually necessary to achieve (and sometimes maintain) the desired result. It is not uncommon for owners to observe improvement in their pet's condition after the first acupuncture treatment; however, **several weekly acupuncture treatments must be completed before accurately assessing their effectiveness.** Depending upon the severity of the disease, some pets may not show signs of improvement until the **sixth or eighth** treatment. Just as in Western medicine, the earlier your pet's disease is diagnosed and treated, the quicker and better the response to treatment.

***Is acupuncture painful? How will my pet react?***

Acupuncture is performed with a single use sterilized stainless steel needle that is as thin as a human hair. Occasionally your pet will experience a brief moment of sensitivity as the needle penetrates the skin in certain sensitive areas. Once the needles are in place, most pets relax, often falling asleep during treatment. For some nervous pets, it may take several treatments before they feel comfortable enough to fully relax.

***Is acupuncture safe?***

Acupuncture is one of the safest therapies available if practiced by a competent acupuncturist. Side effects are rare. Occasionally an animal's condition may deteriorate temporarily before positive results can be seen. If your pet is extremely weak due to advanced disease, we may choose only a small number of acupuncture points in the beginning and a shorter treatment time until the pet improves or gains strength. Other potential complications include the chance that the pet will overuse an injured limb (because of decreased pain as a result of the acupuncture), resulting in a more serious injury.

***How often and for how long will the treatments last?***

The first appointment will last approximately 60-90 minutes (for full evaluation and treatment), while most rechecks will take approximately 30 minutes. The actual acupuncture treatment may last from 10 seconds to 20 minutes depending on the condition treated and the method used. Pets may be treated as frequently as one to three times a week (depending upon the condition treated), but are typically treated once weekly for four to six weeks. Maintenance treatments can vary from weekly to once every few months.

***If I choose acupuncture as a form of treatment for my pet, does that mean that I will not need any medications?***

Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine is not exclusive of Western medicine. For some diseases, using a combination of conventional medicine (drugs and/or surgery), Chinese herbal medicine, dietary changes, massage therapy, and acupuncture therapy will achieve a much better outcome than when only one of these modalities is used alone.

***If my pet has cancer can we use acupuncture?***

There is a concern that improving blood flow in the body may help the cancer grow instead of reducing it. For this reason, we try to avoid treating local areas surrounding a malignant (cancerous) tumor. However, acupuncture is a wonderful therapy to help with pain relief, improve energy level and reduce side effects of radiation and chemotherapy (reduces nausea and diarrhea), and is, therefore, often used in the treatment of cancer patients.

***What is herbal medicine and how does it work?***

Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine is a combination of acupuncture and herbal medicine. Acupuncture addresses more the outer, "physical" body, while herbal medicines target more the internal body. Herbal medicine dates back to prehistoric times. Plants were the original source of many pharmaceutical drugs, including aspirin from willow tree bark, vincristine (chemotherapy drug) from periwinkle, morphine from poppy, cardiac glycosides (digoxin) from foxglove and quinine (anti-malaria drug) from cinchona tree. In TCVM, most formulas include several individual herbs that work synergistically to improve outcome and also help to reduce any side effects. Although herbal medicines are naturally derived, it is important to remember that they have powerful effects and can interact with pharmaceutical drugs and, therefore, should only be prescribed by an experienced herbalist.

***When can my pet be evaluated?***

Integrative medicine and acupuncture consultations are available 6 days a week, Monday to Saturday. Please allow 60-90 minutes for new consultations and 30 minutes for recheck appointments.

**To make an appointment, please call 212-838-7053.**

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