

# CHOOSING ACUPUNCTURE

A GUIDE FOR NEW PATIENTS



**Acupuncture** is an ancient form of medicine that has become widely used in the U.S. today.

It is thought to help balance and unblock the flow of energy along pathways in the body through the placement of fine needles at certain points along these pathways; this may ease pain and allow healing. Acupuncture is used to treat a range of health issues such as spinal and joint pain, headaches, and nausea.

Health issues that can be helped by acupuncture and may be covered by your health plan include:

- Muscle and joint pain
- Headaches
- For women, pain with periods
- Nausea and vomiting because of pregnancy, cancer treatments, or after surgery

The amount of acupuncture care covered by your benefit plan may be based on medical necessity. This means that information about your general health, your pain levels, and your ability to do daily tasks will help determine your plan's coverage decisions.

## HOW TO CHOOSE AN ACUPUNCTURIST

Choosing an acupuncture professional is a personal choice. Consider asking your friends, family, or doctor if they know a provider they like. Here are a few questions you may want to ask your acupuncturist:

- What training, certification, and experience do you have?
- How many years have you practiced?
- Do you have a specialty?
- How will you help me with my health issues?
- How often do I have to come for treatment, and for how long?
- What are the benefits and risks of my treatment choices?
- How will you check to see if the acupuncture is working?

## HOW ARE ACUPUNCTURE PROFESSIONALS TRAINED?

Acupuncture treatment is based on medical systems that are thousands of years old. Acupuncture was first practiced in Asia and now is more widely used in the United States.

Today's acupuncture professionals are licensed, certified, or registered health care workers, and highly educated. American Specialty Health (ASH) ensures that all acupuncture professionals who work with ASH have the right credentials.

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING YOUR VISIT?

During your first visit, the acupuncturist will evaluate your needs, set up a care plan, and start your treatment.

Acupuncture treatment uses fine, single-use needles on certain points on your body to help improve your health. Most people do not feel the needles at all. During your visit you may also receive other treatments, such as:

- Electrostimulation (at a mild level to the needles or flat on the skin)
- Moxibustion (a heated herb on the outside of the body)
- Acupressure (pressure is applied to acupuncture points without needles)
- Therapeutic Massage
- Food plans

Not all of these types of treatment are covered by insurance plans. Please check your plan and talk with your acupuncturist before you have treatments.

## CHECKLIST

Look for an acupuncture professional who:

- Is licensed or certified in your state
- Treats you with respect
- Listens well to your health concerns
- Answers your questions in a way that you can understand
- Refers you to your doctor or other health care providers, as needed
- You can feel comfortable working with
- Works with you to set up treatment goals and a plan to check your progress

This information is not meant to take the place of medical advice or health care. As always, keep your doctor and other members of your health care team up to date about the treatments you would like to use to improve your health and the goals you want to achieve. Talking with your health care team can help you get the best and safest health care.

**To find a contracted ASH acupuncturist,**  
visit your health plan's website, or call  
ASH Customer Service at **800.678.9133**.