

# Acupuncture & Training

**COMBINED WITH COMMITMENT TO A SOUND TRAINING SCHEDULE AND A BALANCED DIET, ACUPUNCTURE CAN GIVE BODYBUILDERS, ATHLETES AND GYMNASTS A COMPETITIVE EDGE.**

By Angela Zhu

**A**s well as enhancing energy levels and performance, acupuncture can also help athletes build physical strength and endurance, reduce anxiety, promote relaxation and boost confidence. It's also great for treating any injuries.

Acupuncture is the ancient Chinese method of sticking needles into the surface of the body at selected pressure points to reduce pain and speed up recovery from injuries or diseases. For a healthy person, acupuncture can be used to maintain wellbeing. It's like a massage but it goes deeper than the muscles and ligaments, making it more effective.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

## GO WITH THE FLOW

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) believes that good mental, emotional and physical health depend on the flow of life energy, Qi or Chi (pronounced 'chee'), and the circulation of blood throughout the body to maintain a proper balance between Yin (the body) and Yang (the function) forces. Qi is the driving force for blood circulation. When Qi and blood flow are enhanced, the endocrine system is stimulated and muscles and ligaments will grow more effectively.

Illness and lack of wellbeing are caused by disturbances to the natural Qi. There could be too much Qi, or not enough, in particular parts of the body due to barriers or blockages caused by injuries or disease. Consequently, not enough blood flows in some areas, causing malfunctions and pain. In TCM, these barriers are removed and the flow of Qi and blood are stimulated by acupuncture or by Chinese exercise regimes such as Qi Gong.

## WHAT'S INVOLVED?

Acupuncture involves inserting sterilised, fine stainless steel needles into the surface of the body at selected pressure points to stimulate the flow of Qi to or from a particular area and to increase blood flow and oxygenation of the body. This provides renewed energy and a positive sense of wellbeing. It also removes aches and reduces pain. The needles do not hurt! You only feel a very slight prick when a needle is inserted.

For more than 4,000 years Chinese medical practitioners have studied the relationships between different points of the body and the alleviation of discomfort and pain. Acupuncturists are thoroughly trained in placing needles in the right places to stimulate the flow of Qi in particular parts of the body or throughout the whole body.

## HOW IT CAN HELP YOU

Acupuncture can benefit people undertaking weight training and other forms of intensive exercise by increasing energy levels and enhancing stamina and endurance. Acupuncture helps to balance the Yin (the body) and the Yang (the function) to provide a positive attitude towards training that is conducive to achieving satisfactory results.

For women who want to exercise strenuously it is important to have a healthy menstrual cycle and a well-balanced endocrine system to maintain hormonal balance. The endocrine system enables muscles and ligaments to repair and grow and helps to keep them flexible. Acupuncture can help women to have healthy periods, reduce menstrual pain and maintain hormonal balance.

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## DIET

Diet is important for the effective generation of body energy and the growth of muscles and muscle strength. Energy is produced by the digestive process in the stomach and the spleen is believed to control the growth of muscles. Acupuncture can be used to generate more stomach and spleen energy and to help overcome indigestion, constipation or diarrhoea which can severely reduce energy levels and strength.

A well-balanced diet with a variety of foods is necessary to produce sufficient quantities of Qi and blood. An inadequate diet will affect the growth and strength of muscles. It is important to have a good balance of protein and carbohydrate. Carbohydrate intake is particularly important for women to produce energy and blood. An appropriate amount of carbohydrate helps people to get rid of anxiety and feel relaxed and happy.

## FINDING AN ACUPUNCTURIST

To find an acupuncturist, ask your friends or do a search on the internet for a qualified practitioner in your area. Some medical doctors can provide acupuncture. Phone or visit the acupuncturist to tell them what you want and ask how many treatment sessions would be required and how much each treatment session would cost.

A treatment session with an acupuncturist could cost anywhere from \$60-\$100 for a 30-60 minute session depending on the practitioner. The initial session may cost more because it will take more time to talk about what you expect and to make a diagnosis as well as provide treatment.

Acupuncture, generally, should be repeated on a regular basis to be most effective. ☉

Angela Zhu is principal of Traditional Qi Pty Ltd and Qi Gong & Tai Chi Institute Australia. She is a qualified practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and a National Accredited Qi Gong and Tai Chi instructor who specialises in applying acupuncture and the exercises of Qi Gong and Tai Chi to promote healing and personal well-being. Angela was born in Beijing and followed in the footsteps of her grandfather, father and mother to become a TCM practitioner. She has practised in China and Europe and has been in practice in Australia since 1992. [www.traditionalqi.com](http://www.traditionalqi.com)

**Publisher** Michael Henry

**Editor** Lindy Olsen

**Assistant Editor** Sarah Pope

**Features Co-ordinator** Megan Manners

**Art Director** Andy Quilty

**Chief Photographer** Dallas Olsen

**Photographers** Gary Phillips, Rob Czempinski

**Australian Publisher**

**FITmedia**

Unit 3/9 Foamcrest Ave Newport NSW 2106

Telephone 02 9999 3384 Facsimile 02 9999 3336

Email: editor@oxygenmag.com.au

**Advertising**

**Tim Henry**

Telephone: 02 9999 0234

Facsimile: 02 9999 3385

Mobile: 0450 885 057

Email: adman@fitmedia.com.au

PO Box 880 Newport NSW 2106

**Subscription and Reader Services**

**Australia and New Zealand**

subscriptions@oxygenmag.com.au

PO Box 1068 Ashmore City Qld 4214

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## OXY Contributors

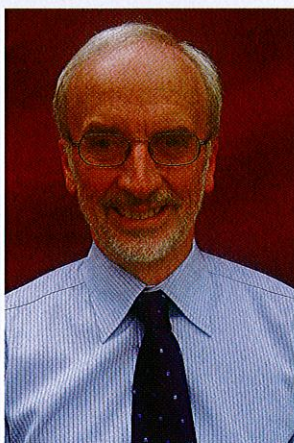
### ANGELA ZHU



Angela Zhu is principal of Traditional Qi Pty Ltd and Qi Gong & Tai Chi Institute Australia. She is a qualified practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and a National Accredited Qi Gong and Tai Chi instructor who specialises in applying acupuncture and the exercises of Qi Gong and Tai Chi to promote healing and personal well-being. Angela was born in Beijing and followed in the footsteps of her grandfather, father and mother to become a TCM practitioner. She has practised in China and Europe and has been in practice in Australia since 1992.

[www.traditionalqi.com](http://www.traditionalqi.com)

### GEOFF EDWARDS



Geoff Edwards is a highly experienced Life Coach who helps his clients achieve their ambitions. He has been an adviser to people from all walks of life for over 25 years. Geoff is passionate about people's potential and teaches his clients to overcome challenges through increased awareness. He is especially skilled in people management and he has impacted the lives of a large number of people through his personal improvement programs and seminars, with results that last. Geoff is the author of "The Success Coach." You can visit his website at [www.geoffedwards.net](http://www.geoffedwards.net).

### JENNIFER ATKINS



Jennifer Atkins is one of Australia's leading Mind and Body Coaches. Jen is renowned for her ability to discover what is holding people back from achieving success in their lives and breaking through their limitations to achieve amazing results. Jen is a qualified Professional Life Coach, NLP Master Practitioner, Clinical Hypnotherapist, Personal Trainer and the Founder and Director of Genesis Mind & Body.