

PINS AND NEEDLES of Running Recovery


Acupuncture can help runners perform better and recover quicker.

By incorporating acupuncture into their training regime, runners can avoid injuries and recover far quicker from the effects of a heavy run, or an injury.

By Angela Zhu

Acupuncture is also useful for boosting energy levels; increasing physical strength, stamina and flexibility; and reducing anxiety, particularly ahead of competition. In addition to promoting recovery or healing, acupuncture after a run can help alleviate discomfort or pain in muscles, joints and ligaments.

Over time, runners make great demands on their bodies which can result in stresses and strains on the muscles

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and ligaments associated with movement of the hips, legs and feet. Common injuries include: 'snapping hip syndrome', a pulled hamstring, 'runner's knee', shin splints and ankle sprains. These can range in severity, from irritating discomfort to being debilitating. Even at the irritating level the discomfort should not be ignored – it indicates something is out of balance.

HOW IT WORKS

Acupuncture is a form of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) that has been practised in China for thousands of years to reduce pain and promote healing. It involves inserting sterilised, thin stainless steel needles into the surface of the body at selected 'pressure points' along the 'meridians' of the circulation system to promote the flow of blood, and hence the flow of oxygen and 'life energy' (Qi pronounced 'chee') throughout the body. Blood flow also removes toxins.

When blood flow is severely restricted by injury or disease the blood becomes stagnant, lacks oxygen and cannot deliver sufficient energy to the affected area to overcome the problem. Toxins that are normally removed by blood flow, build up and exacerbate the situation.

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The insertion of needles at the correct pressure points stimulates constricted blood vessels to open and allow more blood to flow. This provides more energy to the affected parts of the body which helps relieve stiffness, swelling and soreness associated with ligament stretching, sprains and muscle lacerations that are commonly experienced after a run.

The most commonly asked question about acupuncture is, "Does it hurt?" And the answer is... "No. You only feel a slight prick when the needle is inserted."

For a healthy person, acupuncture can be used to promote energy levels and general well-being – like having a massage, but it's much deeper than just surface muscles and ligaments, and much more effective.

USES FOR RUNNERS

For runners, acupuncture can be used to improve the physical and mental condition in preparation for an important run.

Running long distances can cause the build up of pressures and tensions in the leg muscles which can restrict the flow of blood and energy. Acupuncture before a run can stimulate blood circulation, so the body will be able to perform at its best.

Acupuncture also helps athletes to relax and sleep more deeply, so they'll have higher energy levels and a more positive mental attitude about competing.

For runners suffering from an injury, acupuncture can be used to overcome the blockages or barriers associated with the injury. It can also increase the flow of oxygenated blood and energy to the affected area, to remove toxins and promote healing.

TREATMENT OF INJURIES

Of course, the best way to treat injuries is to avoid having them. This includes recovering properly from an injury before running again! This is often overlooked.

Regular acupuncture helps to create and maintain a healthy body that is strong enough to deal with the stresses long distance running place on it. But the runner needs to look after his or her body by following sensible exercise regimes, particularly after demanding runs that produce muscle soreness or injury. The body needs time to recover.

Common running-related muscle injuries can be treated by inserting acupuncture needles into the deeper muscle tissue. This gets close to the source of the pain and provides more direct and more effective treatment of deep muscle tissue than is possible with other methods.

Muscle cramping is a major issue for many runners. Cramping and other strains that result from inadequate blood circulation and a lack of flexibility can be successfully overcome by having acupuncture as a preventative measure before running. Acupuncture will relax and energise the muscles, making them more flexible and supple so they will stretch more easily and cramping and strains are less likely to occur.

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KEY BENEFITS

The incorporation of acupuncture into a runner's training program will assist by reducing recovery times and making training more comfortable. Acupuncture before a competition can increase energy levels and enhance performance by removing anxiety and increasing confidence. And in the event of an injury, acupuncture can speed the healing process.

The number of acupuncture sessions required will vary greatly depending on the intensity of your training schedule, or the nature of your injury. It is absolutely essential that acupuncture treatments are done by a qualified practitioner who will work with you to develop an acupuncture program that will meet your needs. To be most effective, acupuncture should be repeated on a regular basis.

Treatment sessions with an acupuncturist can last from 30 to 60 minutes, and are usually priced around \$60 to \$100. The initial session may cost more, because it will include time talking about what you expect, or to make a diagnosis, as well as provide treatment. *ufm*

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Jamison is a Certified Personal Trainer, Sports Nutrition Specialist and Group Fitness Instructor. His passion for exercise extends beyond his profession. He believes in creating an optimal, balanced approach to fitness for himself and all his clients. He focuses his training on Boot Camp classes, individual training sessions and online training, including meal and fitness plans. www.jamisonfit.com



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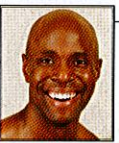
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Brigitte shares unconventional wisdom for creative people on a mission at her blog, *Unfettered Ink.com*. On her blog she also courts all sorts of good karma by serving up *PR Ideas for Busy People* to entrepreneurs with grand ideas but limited resources.



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For over 20 years Julian was an elite paddler in several National teams and at the Australian Institute of Sport. He won 7 x World Cups, 14 x National championships and numerous medals internationally and domestically in sprint canoeing and surf life saving. Julian has a Degree in Marketing and Sports Coaching and Level 2 coaching certificates in sprint canoeing and surf life saving. www.paddle2fitness.com.au



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Mireille is a registered Personal Trainer, author, fitness expert, radio personality and the owner and founder of Health Guru Boot Camp. After 10 years in fitness she has taught thousands of women in Sydney, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. She is co-founder of The Busy Mums Fitness Club, one of Australia's fastest growing fitness websites for mums www.busymumsfitnessclubs.com



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Julia Thorn

Julia lives in Melbourne. She started bike riding in her twenties and then turned to running, swimming and doing triathlons. In 1997 she ran her first marathon and has now run 102 marathons, more than any other Australian female. Julia's book *Passion for Distance - the story of my 100 marathons* is available from bookshops and www.melbournebooks.com.au



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Chad is a sport and exercise psychologist who specialises in helping personal trainers increase client retention and client results. He also has a private practice in which he mentors personal trainers and helps athletes increase their performance. For further information on workshops, one-on-one coaching, and products please go to www.chadtimmermans.com.au or contact chad@chadtimmermans.com.au



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