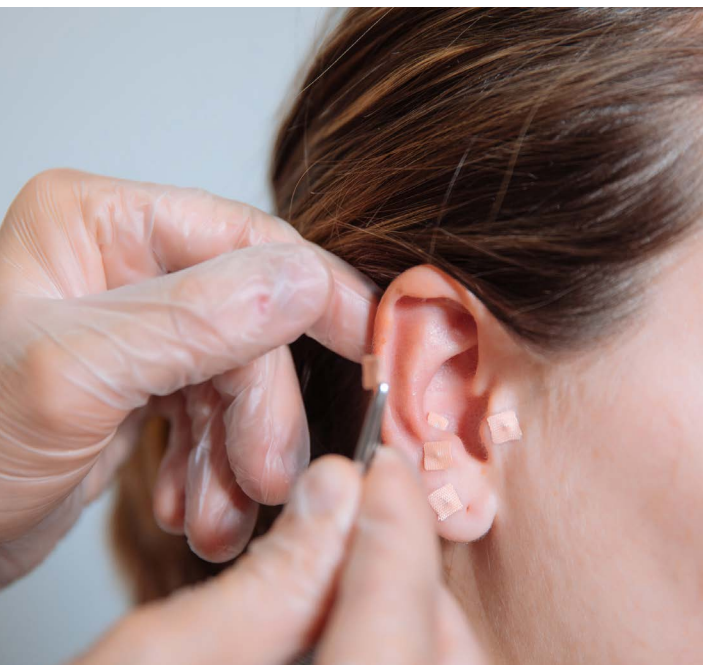


TREATMENT LENGTH

- Relief may be immediate with new onset pain.
- Chronic conditions may require several acupuncture sessions.
- Veterans should initially expect 4-6 sessions to give their bodies time to adjust to the acupuncture procedure.

RISKS OF ACUPUNCTURE

- You should find an acupuncturist to discuss the risks and benefits of acupuncture with your Veterans.
- Acupuncture may include electrical stimulation of the needles.
 - This can cause problems for individuals with pacemakers or other implanted electrical devices.
- Individuals with bleeding disorders or who take blood thinners may have increased risk of bleeding.



CLINICIANS: AIM TO L.E.A.R.N

- L** Listen with empathy to the Veteran's perception of the problem.
- E** Explain your perspective of the problem.
- A** Acknowledge and discuss the differences and similarities between these perspectives.
- R** Recommend a treatment plan.
- N** Negotiate a mutually agreed-upon treatment plan.

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- ▶ va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/professional-resources/Acupuncture.asp
- ▶ va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/docs/AcupunctureFactSheet_508.pdf

Additional information on complementary headache management can be found at:

- ▶ mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/complementary-and-alternative-approaches-to-treating-headaches.asp

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SC MIRECC Website: ▶ mirecc.va.gov/vsn16

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ACUPUNCTURE FOR TREATING HEADACHES



Clinician Brochure



VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

This brochure was supported by a clinical educator grant from the VA South Central Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC).

Headache diagnoses in the military population are commensurate to that in the general population:

21%

WOMEN

7%

MEN

Headaches may be classified as:

- Primary (i.e., benign pain with no underlying pathology).
- Secondary (i.e, pain due to underlying pathological causes that may be harmful).

Veterans experience comorbidities that exacerbate their headaches including:

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Insomnia

The two most common types of primary headaches are:



Migraine

- Neurological condition
- Moderate-to-severe pain
- Pulsating/throbbing pain quality
- Nausea and vomiting
- Sensitivity to both light and sound

Tension-Type Headache (TTH)

- Most common headache disorder
- Mild-to-moderate pain intensity
- Tightening/pressing pain quality

Veterans experience a high incidence of post-traumatic headaches (PTHAs) associated with TBI and loss of consciousness that begin within seven days of head trauma.

- Migraine is most common in Veterans with PTHAs.

Acupuncture is an Ancient Chinese medical practice.

It is used as a way to reopen a bodily energy path called Qi (pronounced 'chee').

- This is done by placing very small needles into particular acupoints just below the surface of the skin.
- These small needles are about the width of a human hair.

Acupuncturists target acupoints to treat conditions including headaches and other head and face pain conditions.

The US military uses Battlefield Acupuncture on parts of the ear to help active-duty service members with muscle and back pain as well as headaches.

Acupuncture may also be done with complimentary therapies such as:

- Suction (cupping)
- Pressure (acupressure)
- Heat
- Friction



INTERPROFESSIONAL TEAM APPROACHES INCREASE BENEFITS

- Interprofessional approaches informed by the biopsychosocial model offer greater benefit than treatment by a single clinician.
- Collaborate with interprofessional team members to provide care consistent with the Whole Health system of care.

ACUPUNCTURE IMPACTS HEADACHES

Acupuncture reduces the number of days with headache for Veterans with migraine and tension-type headaches.

Acupuncture works in different ways:

Local effect

- Intramuscular stimulation
- Nerve stimulation

Non-local, systemic effect

- Impacts neurotransmitters that affect mood (i.e., serotonin and dopamine) and pain-modulation (i.e., met-enkephalin and substance P) to relieve headaches

VETERAN DESCRIPTIONS OF ACUPUNCTURE



Relaxing



Energizing



Tingling



Heavy