



# Ask a local expert

## Is acupuncture a solution to chronic back pain?

BY SALLY MCMAHON

Does acupuncture really work? The verdict is still out. Acupuncture is used by millions of Americans for relief from chronic pain. However, if you ask ten different people their opinions on acupuncture, you are likely to get ten different answers.

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) states that there has been “considerable controversy surrounding its value as a therapy. Research exploring a number of possible mechanisms for acupuncture’s pain-relieving effects is ongoing.”

*Medical News for You* talked with Martha Graziano, who is with Classical Acupuncture & Herbs in Louisville, to learn more. Graziano is the president of the Kentucky State Acupuncture Association (KSAA). It was through KSAA’s efforts that acupuncture became certified by the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure and legally available to the public.

**How long have you been in the acupuncture business and why did you choose it?**

**Martha Graziano:** I have been in business since 2008 and I have been interested in acupuncture since 1972. Acupuncture is an amazing system that has been around for thousands of years and it really works to help people with a wide variety of issues. Ever since my graduate school days, I have read about the scientific research on acupuncture, showing measurable changes in circulation, blood pressure and levels of



Martha Graziano treating a patient.

neurotransmitters and hormones.

**What type of ailments do you treat?**

**MG:** I have a lot of folks who come in for back pain. Sometimes I go through periods where back pain seems to be the “backbone” of my clinic. Acupuncture is well regarded for treating both chronic and acute conditions including back pain, sciatica, neck/shoulder pain, basically any part of the body in pain.

I treat a lot of headaches, migraines, allergies, asthma, digestive disorders, insomnia, fertility, arthritis, anxiety, stress, depression, joint pain, fibromyalgia and sports injuries. I also treat a range of women’s health issues and gynecological disorders such as PMS, hot flashes and related menopausal problems.

**Are people still skeptical about the effectiveness of acupuncture?**

**MG:** People in Louisville are becoming more receptive to using acupuncture. Additionally there has been much more positive reports in the national and

**Acupuncture** stimulates points on the body by penetrating the skin with thin, solid, metallic needles that are manipulated by the hands or by electrical stimulation. Practiced in China and other Asian countries for thousands of years, acupuncture is one of the key components of traditional Chinese medicine.

— National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)

local news. More and more doctors are recognizing that acupuncture is a complementary practice that can help a lot of their clients.

**What is the number one myth surrounding acupuncture?**

**MG:** That the needles used are painful. People tend to have fear of needles or pain. Our needles are sterile and only used once. Typically you can fit 25 to 30 of our needles inside a doctor’s syringe. Some people feel the needles go in, but once in, they don’t notice pain. Most people find acupuncture extremely relaxing – so much so that people wake themselves snoring.

**What do you want people to know about acupuncture?**

**MG:** Acupuncture can be a very helpful stand-alone therapy, or it can also work as a complementary therapy to other Western medicine. It is now recognized that acupuncture can improve the odds for success in fertility, as seen by many women using acupuncture in conjunction with invitro fertilization or other high-tech fertility regimes. Also in regards to certain conditions, sometimes back pain or frozen shoulder, some people may choose to work with acupuncture in conjunction with a chiropractor, physical therapist or other modality. 🐾

## Does Insurance Cover Acupuncture?

You can find out if your insurance provides acupuncture benefits by calling your insurance company’s patient information or benefits line. This number can be found on your insurance card.

If your insurance provider *does* cover acupuncture, here are a few questions that you should ask:

1. How many treatments do I get?
2. How much does the insurance company pay?
3. What is the normal co-pay for acupuncture from a preferred provider?

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