



## How to Take Care of Yourself After an Acupuncture Treatment

Acupuncture gets things moving, potentially causing your body to react in ways that it's not used to. You want to honor that experience by giving yourself time to see how things shake out. Here are six ways to take care of yourself *after* an acupuncture treatment:

**Rest.** You don't have to literally lie down or take a nap (although, bonus if you can). By rest, I mean, go easy. Don't help your friend move into a six-floor walkup apartment. Don't babysit for your sister's colicky baby and two-month-old puppy. Don't stay up really late that night. Some people get a jolt of energy after acupuncture, but better to savor the boost—chances are, you need it. Resting allows the physical and emotional restoration that acupuncture sets in motion to continue.

**Go light on exercise.** A lot of people ask whether they can workout after acupuncture. Exercise is fine—light, gradual movement can be a nice adjunct to an acupuncture treatment—but be gentle. If you're a runner, try walking on the day you have acupuncture. If you normally take advanced yoga classes, give a beginner or intermediate class a whirl. If you've never hiked to the top of that mountain, acupuncture day probably isn't the best day to try.

**Use heat.** One of the most common questions I get from people who are going to acupuncture for pain relief is, "Should I use heat or ice?" Heat is the answer almost every time. From an acupuncture perspective, many pain conditions are caused by stagnation. Things are not moving smoothly through the channels, causing blockages that lead to pain. Acupuncture restores flow, helping to eliminate these blockages. (Watch this cool video to better understand this concept.) Looking at pain in this way, ice is counterproductive—it causes things to remain stagnant and slows down the healing process. After acupuncture, choose heat.

**Avoid alcohol and coffee.** This is for two reasons: 1) It's important to stay hydrated after acupuncture because it can cause toxins to be released into your system. Staying appropriately hydrated helps flush out these toxins. Since alcohol and coffee both cause dehydrating effects on the body, they should be avoided after acupuncture. 2) Alcohol and coffee mess with your bodily awareness. One of the main goals of acupuncture is to bring greater clarity and awareness to how we really feel. Since alcohol impairs the senses and coffee falsely heightens them, both can potentially counteract or mask the effects of acupuncture. You don't have to eliminate these things from your life, but steer clear for a day or two after acupuncture.

**Turn off the TV.** Acupuncture helps bring you into a place of balance, where your sympathetic nervous system (fight-or-flight response) is no longer in overdrive. Your mind is calmer and clearer, enjoying a respite from the overstimulating world in which we live. As soon as you click on that TV, it all comes flooding back—inconstant advertising, screaming pundits, news flashes, noise and more noise. Keep the TV off and you'll extend your state of acu-bliss.

**Eat good food.** Acupuncture helps bring the toxins out. Don't knowingly put them back in by eating poor-quality food. Avoid processed foods and sugar. Think about food as sustenance, and eating as an opportunity to continue healing your body after acupuncture. When we conceive of food in this way, fast food and other junk become less appealing. After acupuncture, imagine the foods that would make you feel nourished and healthy, then go eat them.