



Traditional acupuncture has become popular in the United States and the rest of the world in recent decades. Data released by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2008 reported that 3.1 million American adults and 150,000 children used acupuncture in 2007. Adult use of acupuncture has increased by approximately a million people in the five years from 2002 to 2007.¹⁰

Acupuncture FACTS

What is acupuncture?

- The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), a division of the National Institutes of Health, defines acupuncture as “the insertion of dry needles at specially chosen sites for the treatment or prevention of symptoms and conditions.”¹ Acupuncture literally means to puncture with a needle.² Acupuncture can be defined to include traditional body needling, electric acupuncture (electro-acupuncture), and microsystem acupuncture such as ear (auricular), face, hand and scalp acupuncture.³ Thus, Acupuncture becomes a system of medicine that utilizes needles to achieve therapeutic effect.⁴

Who uses acupuncture?

- Generally, educated people who are proactive with their health care needs use acupuncture. Acupuncture is no longer considered “alternative” but is accepted within the medical profession as “integrative” health care. Mayo Clinic advises: “You may try acupuncture for symptomatic relief of a variety of diseases and conditions, including: chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting , fibromyalgia , headaches, labor pain , low back pain, menstrual cramps, migraines, osteoarthritis , dental pain ; tennis elbow.”⁶

Is acupuncture safe?

- The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine reports: “Relatively few complications have been reported from the use of acupuncture. However, acupuncture can cause potentially serious side effects if not delivered by a **qualified** practitioner.”⁷
- The World Health Organization agrees: “In **competent** hands, acupuncture is generally a safe procedure with few contraindications or complications... **There are the risks due to inadequate training of the acupuncturist.** These include inappropriate selection of patients, errors of technique, and failure to recognize contraindications and complications, or to deal with emergencies when they arise.”⁸

What is a Licensed Acupuncturist (LAc)?

- Licensed Acupuncturists (LAc) are individuals who attain national Acupuncture certification through the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM). LAc's undergo a rigorous training program at a minimum standard of three academic years, 1490 hours in Acupuncture, including point location and needle technique. Of the 1490 hours in Acupuncture, 660 hours must be clinical hours, in other words, hours spent practicing Acupuncture under the supervision of another LAc. In addition, NCCAOM-certified Acupuncturists are required to be certified in Clean Needle Technique and must complete Continuing Education Units in order to maintain their certification.⁹

Sources:

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