I own a huge Dodge Ram that is decked out with a siren and flashing light, but do you want to know what I get asked about the most? The bumper sticker that has a spine with needles in it and a quote that says, “Physical Medicine Acupuncture…and it works every single time!”

Why am I qualified to make that statement? It’s because I am living proof that acupuncture works. I’ve not only been an acupuncturist for years, but I’ve also seen the healing powers of acupuncture first-hand. And it’s not just me who feels this way; multiple scientific studies have come to the same result!

Many people fear acupuncture because they don’t know what it is. So what exactly is it? Acupuncture is the practice of inserting thin needles into skin at strategic points. It originates from Chinese medicine and was first used as a way to treat pain. Traditional Chinese medicine says that acupuncture works because it helps the body balance Qi, which is the flow of energy or life source. Those who support that theory believe that inserting the thing needles into targeted points of the body helps your energy flow re-balance. Western practitioners tend to believe that acupuncture works as it stimulates nerves, muscles, and connective tissue to increase blood flow acting as a natural painkiller. It is believed that the acupuncture points stimulate the central nervous system, which, in turn, causes the release of chemicals into the muscles, spinal cord, and brain[[1]](#endnote-0).

People are often turned off by the images of people with needles sticking out of their body. The needles are so thin, that they are not painful, although sometimes a little discomfort may be felt. Generally between five and twenty needles will be used in a treatment. Some patients report feeling an aching sensation when the needle hits the correct area and depth of the targeted area, but the sensation depends on the patient. The needles are generally left in place for ten to twenty minutes and then removed[[2]](#endnote-1).

Just this week, a new study from scientists at the University of Pennsylvania was published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. The study found that needles (acupuncture) beat pills for treating hot flashes in breast cancer survivors[[3]](#endnote-2). Yes, you read that correctly! The safe and non-evasive acupuncture performs better than a harmful pill!

And that’s not the only study that suggests the power of acupuncture! It’s not just a solution for people with cancer. A recent study at the University of California-Irvine that was published in the journal *Medical Acupuncture*, found that some forms of acupuncture could actually lower blood pressure for up to six weeks with just one session![[4]](#endnote-3)

What about for couples who are trying to get pregnant? These are some of my most common patients. How about this – a study performed by fertility experts found that using acupuncture along with tradition IVF treatments could increase pregnancy by as much as 42.5%[[5]](#endnote-4)!

Here’s why I stand so firmly behind acupuncture. I don’t think we should just treat something when we can offer an experience for a person to physically feel the stress and tension dissipate through their mind, body, and spirit. I can also help them access new ways of thinking with acupuncture. If a patient has even a second of that experience, I believe that extraordinary healing events can occur in the body. I’ve seen it for myself.

I tell my patients that it takes a lot of years to accumulate the imbalances that some of them have, whether it is from a chronic illness, an old injury, or something else entirely. But I truly believe that the body tends to lean toward wellness, so I do everything I can to help my patients get underway with their journey. 9 times out of 10, the patient comes back, realizing that something important and profound has happened. I’ve never had a patient ever tell me the session wasn’t helpful or life changing on some level.

Acupuncture tends to get a bad wrap as some type of quack or quasi-Eastern medicine, but I think that’s just wrong. People all around the world have come to find that acupuncture, whether it is used by itself or in conjunction with more traditional medicine, to be a solution to all sorts of problems. If patients are still concerned with the idea, they might consider trying acupressure first. Acupressure, often better known as shiatsu, is often considered acupuncture without needles. It evokes the same principles that acupuncture does, but stimulates the body by massage and touch, not with needles[[6]](#endnote-5). Acupressure can be a good way to test the waters and see if the treatment is right for your specific problem.

1. <http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/complementary_and_alternative_medicine/acupuncture_85,P00171/> [↑](#endnote-ref-0)
2. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/acupuncture/basics/definition/prc-20020778> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
3. <http://jco.ascopubs.org/content/early/2015/08/21/JCO.2015.60.9412.abstract> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
4. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23724695> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
5. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11937123> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
6. <http://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/acupressure-points-and-massage-treatment> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)