

Acupuncture

heals from within

Complementary therapy has grown rapidly in the UK and an increasing number of people are using acupuncture to treat various conditions and improve their general well being. **Arveen Bajaj** finds out how to balance your Yin and Yang.

Acupuncture is an ancient therapy used across the world for the holistic management of disease and the maintenance of health.

The system of healing has been practised in China and other far Eastern countries for thousands of years and has grown in popularity in the West in recent years, said the British Acupuncture Council (BAC) who has 2,500 practitioner members.

Acupuncture, often described as a means of pain relief, can be used to treat people with a wide range of illnesses because it focuses on improving overall wellbeing rather than specific symptoms.

According to Chinese philosophy our health is dependent on the body's motivating energy – known as Qi – moving smoothly through a series of meridians or channels beneath the skin.

Qi comprises equal and opposite energies – called Yin and Yang – and illnesses can result when these forces become unbalanced. The flow of Qi can be disturbed by factors such as anxiety, stress, anger, fear and grief, poor nutrition, hereditary conditions, infections, poisons and trauma. Typical conditions treated by acupuncture include headaches, indigestion, back and joint pains and high blood pressure.

An acupuncturist stimulates the body's healing response and restores the natural balance by inserting fine needles into the skin to tap into the channels of energy. The aim of acupuncture is to treat the person as a whole and recover the equilibrium

between their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

However, the skill of an acupuncturist lies in their ability to make a traditional diagnosis from what is often a complex pattern of disharmony. The degree of imbalance is unique to each individual and so each patient is given a personalised acupuncture treatment plan.

Many people have an aversion to needles usually based on bad childhood experiences of having vaccines or blood tests. However, acupuncture needles are much finer than hypodermic syringe needles and are solid rather than hollow.

When a needle is inserted, the sensation is often described as a tingling or dull ache. An acupuncturist might insert a needle for a few seconds or leave it in place for 30 minutes or more depending on the treatment. During therapy, patients commonly experience heaviness in the limbs or a pleasant feeling of relaxation.

The benefits of one or more sessions of acupuncture include more than just pain relief or alleviation of symptoms, said BAC. Many people also get increased energy levels, better appetite and sleep patterns, and overall improved well being.

For more information about acupuncture or to find an acupuncturist see the BAC website at www.acupuncture.org.uk. To read about how dentists are using acupuncture to help their patients, see page 27.

on your feet

Get **active** on your summer holiday

If you haven't arranged an exotic holiday in the sun then try **Kate Maynard's** alternative ideas for having fun on your summer break.

Summer is the time of year we all yearn for. The sun brings longer, hotter days, winter coats are a distant memory, acres of pale skin are uncovered, at home the barbecue is wheeled out, and in fact everything just looks better in the sunshine.

But if your summer involves sweating on a packed commuter train and waiting eagerly for the weekend only to find the promised sunny weather is replaced by more wet, grey and drizzly days, then you will be counting the days to your summer holiday.

If you haven't been organised and booked your flights, hotel and hire car, bought a new swimsuit, and purchased a family-size vat of sunscreen, perhaps you'd like to try something a little different this year. Here are some suggestions.

Camping

Most of us have some experience of camping. For me it began with Girl Guides where on one memorable trip our tents were awkwardly positioned uphill and we swam in the sea at dawn. Fast forward 12 years to a music festival where I pitched tent in a sea of campers stretching as far as the horizon, which was almost as long as the queue for the portaloos.

For many people, the attraction of camping is the community feel of a campsite, cooking in the open air, being close to nature, and the flexibility to pack up and move from place to place.

Camping has been around since the late nineteenth century in the UK, when a healthy outdoor lifestyle and sporting activities became popular. Originally only men camped but this changed during the twentieth

century when camping holidays, in tents or caravans, became an economical holiday choice for the family.

Today more than one million Britons go camping every year in the UK and abroad—with France a particularly popular destination. There are dozens of websites with advice for novice and experienced campers and these sites are a good place to start.

www.camping.uk.directory.com

www.campinguk.com

www.france-camping.eu.com

www.eurocampindependent.co.uk

Cooking holidays

Is taking in the sights or lazing on the beach not enough for you? Why not combine your holiday with learning new culinary skills.

You could visit parts of the world where



your favourite dish comes from and learn how to prepare it yourself. You will learn something new, be able to sample quality local produce, and impress your friends with your new found knowledge and skills.

A cooking holiday in Rome might take in local olive oil producers, food markets, and vineyards. If you fancy a backdrop of coconut palms and golden sand, you might want to try Indian cooking in Goa. A busy morning of cooking chicken xhacuti could be followed by an afternoon swim in the Indian Ocean.

In Thailand you could learn how the locals use coconut milk and lemon grass and discover the secret ingredients in Thai green curry. So if you fancy Moussaka in Greece, paella in Spain or fried goose liver in Hungary, there is a cooking holiday for every skill and stomach!

www.atasteofrome.com

www.indiaonthemenu.com

www.baipai.com

Naturism

If you are in the mood to try something different, why not shed the stresses of urban life and your clothes at the same time.

Mention naturism and most Brits smirk or make fun but British Naturism calls the practice a “way of life in harmony with nature”.

You may be surprised to learn that British Naturism has about 25,000 members and the International Naturist Federation represents millions of naturists worldwide.

British Naturism says that many British naturists have their first experience abroad – good weather being rather important.

But in the UK naturists can choose from 180 venues and 100 beaches. Most clubs have covered heated pools, saunas and sports facilities.

Many countries cater for naturists including resorts in Austria, Jamaica, and the Philippines; and clubs in France, the Netherlands, Germany and the USA boast even higher membership than the UK.

Give it a go – just think of the all-over tan!
www.british-naturism.org.uk

Snorkelling

On the British coast or in warm seas abroad, there's always something to see underwater. Coral reefs and seahorses in the Mediterranean or rock pools and crabs in Cornwall, you might be surprised by what you discover.

Snorkelling only requires a mask, a snorkel and a pair of fins, all of which can be hired from many resorts. To ensure comfortable snorkelling just make sure you select the right sizes.

You don't have to be a fantastic swimmer or go into deep water to enjoy snorkelling and you can remain at the surface the whole time. Just remember to use sunscreen and keep in sight of the shore.

www.bsacs snorkelling.co.uk

Scuba diving

For the more adventurous, scuba diving is an excellent way to explore what the underwater world has to offer.

The best way to start is to have a taster session in a local swimming pool or with a diving club.

To dive unsupervised on holiday, but with a similarly qualified diver, many people do a course with schools like the British Sub Aqua Club or the Professional Association of Diving Instructors.

Another route is to go on a diving holiday and earn your qualification in the idyllic waters of Egypt's Red Sea, Australia's Great Barrier Reef or the Italian Riviera resort of Portofino.

Whichever method you choose you'll find many people passionate about diving who will be happy to share their watery adventures with you.

www.divernet.com

www.padi.com

Sailing

Imagine the exhilaration of skilfully piloting a yacht with billowing white sails across the open ocean.

You don't have to be Ellen McArthur to master sailing. Children as young as 8-years-old can learn; and with most schools you can enrol the entire family on a sailing course.

Sailing boats come in various shapes and sizes including toppers, lazars, catamarans or yachts.

Sunsail Sailing Schools will tell you where you can learn to sail in the UK or you might ask a travel agent for details on sailing holidays in the Canaries, Thailand, Greece or Croatia. With so many options it's time to leave the congested hotel pool behind.

www.sunsail.com

www.sailingholidays.com

