

Acupuncturist Alex
Maas explains why
acupuncture is an
effective treatment for
many health problems

acupuncture

practised for several thousands years, has treated over
a quarter of the world's population

I first became interested in acupuncture while travelling in Asia. I also used it to treat a knee injury I suffered from practising a martial art – it helped it to heal quickly. I found that acupuncture also helped me to clear my mind and concentrate when I needed to study.

Acupuncture works on the channels of energy that run through your body. By treating them you can release blocks that can help cure pain and illness. The aim of acupuncture is to clear the flow of energy in these channels and stimulate your own body to heal itself. The therapy is safe as all practices and needles are approved by British Acupuncture Council hygiene code, which is approved by the Department of Health. The needles aren't painful as they are very fine and pre-sterilised.

Acupuncture is a holistic therapy that treats the whole person and helps them adjust to the strains and stresses of the modern world. By treating energy levels in the body, acupuncture can help the body to cope better. An acupuncturist manipulates energy levels by either enhancing them if there is an energy deficiency, or releasing them if there is an energy block, at pressure points around the body where the

energy gathers. There are hundreds of points in the body but we concentrate on 40 or 50 of these. Beneficial to males and females alike, acupuncture can help treat most conditions, but the longer you've had the problem the longer it will take to heal. It is beneficial for physiological problems, digestion and skin complaints and it is particularly effective for pain such as headaches, gynaecological problems and sports injuries. It helps with the latter by improving circulation through the tissue. It can also boost energy levels, help with addictions, stress, anxiety and quality of sleep. Acupuncture will have a positive benefit on most ailments because it treats the whole person. However, we cannot use it to treat some specific conditions such as cancer, although it can be used in conjunction with other treatments to help control symptoms. It is also used in the NHS to counter the side-effects of much western medicine. Acupuncture has been practised for several thousand years and has treated over a quarter of the world's population – 1.3 billion people – and has WHO (World Health Organisation) recognition. Acupuncture can also be used as prevention as it can boost immunity and help the body to resist

disease. But most people come to me when they are already ill. In Asia, people are more likely to use it to prevent illness rather than resort to it once a problem occurs.

The meridian or channels connect up different parts of the body – for instance, the toe to the head. Acupuncture can have a quick effect. I have treated a woman who has suffered from back pain for seven years. I have seen her five times and she has, according to her own assessment, had a 75 to 80 per cent improvement in her back pain. During a consultation I will ask about family history, medical history, diet and sleep patterns and check the tongue, which can reveal a lot about existing medical problems. The tongue can be seen as a microcosm of the whole body. The coating and shape of tongue can indicate the health of the body.