



WHAT IS MOXIBUSTION?

Moxibustion is a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) technique that involves the burning of mugwort, a small, spongy herb, to facilitate healing. Moxibustion has been used throughout Asia for thousands of years. Medical historians believe that moxibustion pre-dates acupuncture, and needling came to supplement moxibustion after the 2nd century BC.

The purpose of moxibustion, as with most forms of traditional Chinese medicine, is to strengthen the blood, stimulate the flow of qi (life energy) and maintain general health. Suppliers usually age the mugwort and grind it up to a fluff; practitioners then burn the fluff or process it further into a stick that resembles a cigar (called moxa). They can use it indirectly, with acupuncture needles, or sometimes apply it on a patient's skin.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING MOXIBUSTION?

Practitioners use moxibustion to warm regions and acupuncture points with the intention of stimulating energy circulation through the points and inducing a smoother flow of energy. Mugwort is thought to act as an emmenagogue, meaning that it stimulates blood flow.

Most acupuncture practitioners use rolls of moxa and hold them over the point to be treated. The herb can also be burned atop a fine slice of ginger root to prevent scarring. The primary advantage of moxibustion treatment is its safety. If it is properly applied, there are almost no side effects. Practitioners consider moxibustion to be especially effective in the treatment of chronic problems and what TCM views as "deficient conditions" (weaknesses). They believe that moxibustion might add new energy to the body and treat both excess and deficient conditions.

ABOUT US

The Medical Acupuncture Service is part of the Department of Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital. Led by Yuan-Chi Lin, MD, MPH, and Cynthia Tung, MD, MPH, our doctors are fully licensed in Western medicine and also have thorough training in acupuncture as a specialty practice. The service provides care for children and young adults to help them manage a variety of acute and chronic pain as well as non-pain-related illnesses through acupuncture. We offer services through our inpatient facility at the Boston Children's Longwood Campus and our outpatient Medical Acupuncture Clinic at Boston Children's Waltham location. The majority of patients come weekly for 4 to 6 weeks.

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