

Is Acupuncture for Drug Addiction Detoxification Right for You?

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You've most likely heard of acupuncture, but did you know that there's a specific type of acupuncture that helps people in recovery? Acupuncture detoxification, also commonly referred to as the "NADA protocol" or "acudetox," is highly effective as a complementary therapy within a comprehensive treatment plan and is used in a variety of healthcare settings throughout the world.

What It Is

Particularly helpful when a person is in the early stages of recovery, acupuncture detox is usually implemented in group sessions, often at treatment centers. Five needles are placed just under the skin at specific points in both ears and left in place for 30-45 minutes while

you relax quietly. Additional acupuncture treatments may also take place at the same time, depending on the provider.

“The treatment is a really good way for providers to be able to establish trust with people without having to do much talking,” Sara Bursac, Executive Director at the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA), tells The Oaks in this exclusive interview. “It’s designed to help bring a person’s body and mind into better balance and achieve homeostasis.”

Acupuncture detox is beneficial for aiding sleep, calming cravings, decreasing irritability and balancing some of the emotional issues that may have contributed to the addiction, Jennifer Cooke, an acupuncturist in Baltimore, says in this interview with The Oaks. “One of the things that I love about acupuncture for addictions is there’s no medication involved. There’s nothing on these needles,” she says.

How It Works

Each of the five points in the ear has a specific functionality. The sympathetic point balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, creating “an analgesic effect on the entire body, which has a very calming effect to the nervous system,” Cooke says. “It balances the stress response within the body.”

The second point is called Shen Men, which is Chinese for “the heart’s gates,” says Cooke. “It’s a point that helps to regulate excitation and inhibit the cerebral cortex. It has a sedative effect, calming anxiety, lifting the spirit and bringing the warmth and joy back into life.” She says this point is also great for people who have insomnia.

The lung point is the third point, supporting regulation of the respiratory system, sweating and elimination. “It has a very detoxifying effect, physically,” Cooke says. “On a spirit level, the lung point is about working through the grieving process and letting go of the little things that get underneath our skin so that there’s room for the important things like beauty, inspiration and spiritual connection.”

Action is the key attribute of the liver point, which helps with hepatitis, anemia, neuralgia, muscle spasms and eye diseases. “On a spirit level, it helps to resolve aggression or anger. It brings a sense of peacefulness and a vision for the future so it allows a client to see the light at the end of the tunnel,” says Cooke.

The kidney point has a detoxification effect and is good for headaches and urinary problems. “On a spirit level, the kidneys are very much about having willpower, coping with fear and finding courage,” Cooke says.

“One of the most valuable parts of the NADA protocol is that it’s non-verbal and people can

get an immediate response from the treatment. Within minutes they start to feel more relaxed and at rest and it begins to take their body out of a fight or flight response,” Bursac says. The treatment also has accumulative effects, which means it builds on itself from one treatment to the next.

Providers

The availability of this treatment depends entirely on what state you’re in. “Some states have learned about NADA and realized that it’s something a non-acupuncturist can do and that they can learn it in fairly short order and do it competently and safely,” says Bursac. “What we’ve seen is that in the states that allow for a non-acupuncture practitioner, there’s a much greater prevalence of NADA programs.”

The Oaks at La Paloma is proud to offer acudetox as part of the comprehensive integrated treatment we provide. If you’d like to talk with someone about how acupuncture might be able to help you or someone you love through the recovery process, please call us to speak with an admissions coordinator.

Benefits

- It curbs cravings, creates mental and emotional balance and decreases the physical aspects of withdrawal. “It helps you detoxify internal organs and calm down and relax. It really soothes your body,” says Andrea Smous, an acupuncturist physician and an acupuncture detoxification specialist in Fort Lauderdale, FL.
- It’s enjoyable. Smous works as a contractor at several treatment centers and says she has people on waiting lists to get into her acupuncture detox groups. “They really do enjoy it. They feel the benefits,” she says. “It gives them a shift in emotional balance that you would not believe.”
- It can be done as often as you need, even several times a day, for as many weeks, months or years as you want. “We recommend that the treatment is done daily at the beginning,” says Bursac. “If someone is in pretty acute withdrawal, it might be beneficial to do it more than once a day.” Cooke says some of her clients choose to keep using acupuncture detoxification for years.
- Because it’s non-verbal, there is no language barrier. “That’s one of the main strengths of the treatment. You don’t even have to speak the person’s language to be able to give this treatment to them,” Bursac points out.
- It’s non-invasive, and there’s no medication involved. “You don’t have to separate females and males, they don’t have to get undressed,” Smous says. “They can just be sitting in recliners or lying down on yoga mats.”

● It's empowering. "The acupuncture unlocks the potential that already exists within," explains Cooke. "If the acupuncture can make them feel this way, they know they are able to achieve that feeling on their own. It's really about empowering the client to take their wellness into their own hands and to find that balance within, on their own, over time."

Remember that for addiction, acupuncture detox is a supplemental therapy that should be used within a comprehensive treatment plan. "You need counseling too. You have to go through all the blockages in your life that are stopping you from making progress and move forward, but this can help you on the path toward that," says Smous.

"When it's an adjunct to other treatments and supports them, then you get the most out of the NADA protocol and it's the most beneficial," Bursac says. "In a treatment context, when it's just given by itself and there aren't any other pieces that are necessary in a recovery process, there's a lot of disappointment. (Recovery) is like a soup. This is an ingredient in the soup, but the soup needs all the other ingredients to be a soup."

For more information on acupuncture detoxification, visit NADA's site at <https://www.acudetox.com/>.

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