

Acupuncture FAQ

To help make the most of our appointment time, please review the following information prior to XXX's first acupuncture appointment. A comprehensive history form will be emailed to you; please return the form at least 48 hours prior to your appointment so that Dr. Whaley has time to review the information and can tailor an acupuncture plan for XXX. Below you will find answers to commonly asked questions regarding acupuncture, including what you should expect from the appointments. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to bring those questions with to your appointment, or reach out in advance (email us at records@tcrehab.com). I look forward to seeing you and XXX!

- Dr. Amy Whaley, DVM, CCRP, CVSMT, CVAT

- **What information do you need prior to acupuncture treatment?**

I will review your pet's medical history, based on our initial consultation (or referral request if you are a patient of another TC Rehab veterinarian); including information you have provided on the acupuncture intake form. While our main focus is musculoskeletal and neurologic conditions, acupuncture can be used for many other conditions; your pet's plan will be tailored to include other body systems if appropriate, based on the history provided.

- **What should I expect at the appointments?**

Appointments will be 30 minutes. At the initial visit, I may ask for additional information based on the history provided, and at subsequent visits will ask about your pet's experience and response to the prior visit so adjustments to the treatment plan can be made if necessary. Each visit will include a brief hands-on myofascial exam to identify additional areas where treatment may be indicated. Pending your pet's comfort level with acupuncture, we may have assistants in the room to help keep your pet calm and still, as well as helping to monitor during treatment. Please let us know if there are any foods/treats your pet cannot tolerate as we may employ treats/lick mats to keep your pet still for treatment.

- **What is acupuncture?**

Acupuncture involves placing needles into the body, with the goal of eliciting a specific response. Traditional Chinese acupuncture has been used over the past 3000 years. Western or more "medically" based acupuncture is what I have been trained in; most of the points I use have scientific explanation of results and research to support their use. That being said, there are many points we use that we still cannot scientifically explain why they work – but they do!

- **How does acupuncture work?**

- Needles are placed in anatomic locations for many reasons, including:
 - Locations that have a large amount of nerve structures, improving the flow of messages throughout the body. Providing "good" neurologic input can help drown out the "bad/pain" signals.
 - Highly vascular areas, influencing blood flow.
 - Areas rich in lymphatics, which affects the flow of fluid throughout the body.
 - Muscle structures including motor points (that affect muscle function) or trigger points in the muscle (hyperirritable bands in muscles where fibers are not functioning properly) with the goal of releasing the tight bands.
 - Fascia – the connective tissue that ties the structures of the body together – this tissue is present throughout the body, which allows needles placed in one area to potentially affect nearby structures.
- Providing input to these structures results in direct input to the body's nervous system (neuromodulation), ultimately helping the body restore homeostasis (balance) and help heal itself using its own natural pathways to improve energy production, reduce inflammation, and provide pain relief.

- **Is acupuncture painful?**
Acupuncture needles are very tiny, and generally very well tolerated, even in cats! Pending the tissues the needle is placed into and your pet's sensitivity (and even your pet's coat type) different lengths and types of needles may be used during a treatment. Most needles aren't even noticed during placement, however in more sensitive areas it may feel like a tiny pin prick or mosquito bite, and in some muscle trigger points may feel like a dull ache. Needle choice and placement may change from visit to visit pending your pet's comfort and response.
- **How many needles will you place?**
Think of acupuncture treatments like a "dose" of medication. Every patient is different; some may show response after a low dose of one or two needles, some may tolerate many more. Multiple factors can affect what your pet may tolerate in a given session, including their age, energy level, behavior, and current medical conditions – generally the first sessions will involve fewer needles. The number and placement of needles may change each session, pending their response.
- **How long do you leave the needles in place?**
Again, this is very patient dependent and may range from a minute or two, up to 20 minutes. Your pet will be monitored for signs of discomfort, changes in activity/energy, and neurologic fatigue to help determine how long needles are to remain in place. Sometimes the body makes this choice for us and needles may fall out before our intended time – this is perfectly normal, and does not mean that a treatment will not be effective.
- **How many sessions will it take to see results?**
As effects are typically cumulative, several treatments will be recommended before we assess if your pet is responding (about 80 to 90% of pets will respond to acupuncture treatment). Some patients can show response after their first treatment! Frequency of treatments will depend on the condition being treated. Like most modalities, once a response is achieved, we will adjust visits to an optimal frequency that maintains our desired response, which of course may change over time. Formal rechecks will also continue to be provided by your primary rehab veterinarian to assess overall comfort and response to the therapy plan.
- **What are common side effects of acupuncture?**
 - Side effects are generally minimal, but some patients can appear stiff or sore after treatments, or may seem very tired for a day. Alternatively, some patients may be energized and more active after treatment.
 - Sometimes certain conditions can seem transiently worse before they improve as the body works to achieve homeostasis, so please do not be alarmed if your pet seems worse for a period of time after treatment. At your next visit, please be sure to let me know your pet's response to the previous treatment, so that we can make necessary dose adjustments.
 - Rarely a needle may enter into a small nearby blood vessel causing temporary bleeding.
 - After treatments, please keep your pet limited to low impact activity for the next 24 hours, provide plenty of fresh water, and be aware they may need to go out more frequently for bathroom breaks.
- **What if my pet won't sit still for the treatment?**
It is okay if your pet does not want to lie down or stay in one spot; at our first appointment I will adjust your pet's treatment based on their preferred position whether it be standing, sitting, or lying down. However, if they seem overly anxious, painful, or agitated at the initial visit, we may discuss if a mild oral sedation can be used at future appointments to help make the sessions more productive. If prior to the first visit you have concerns your pet may do better with sedatives/anti-anxiety medication on board (or has required them at prior veterinary visits), please mention this to your primary TC Rehab doctor, or message our team to get in touch with me prior to our first visit so that we can work to make your pet's visits as relaxed as possible.

- **What is electroacupuncture (EA)?**
 - Electroacupuncture involves use of a low level electrical frequency to further enhance the body's response to acupuncture, especially when working to provide neurologic input or pain relief. Electroacupuncture can be used to treat across areas where direct needle placement may be too painful or contraindicated (such as painful or swollen joints).
 - EA will typically not be used at the first visit, until I can assess your pet's response to manual acupuncture. Please notify me if your pet has a seizure history, heart arrhythmia, or any implanted medical devices such as a pacemaker as EA will generally be avoided for those patients.

- **Are there any contraindications to acupuncture?**
 - The intake questionnaire should help us decide if there are any major concerns, however please be sure to let me know if your pet has any of the following: medical devices (such as a pacemaker), seizure history, cancer, skin wounds, prosthetic devices, recent radiation/chemotherapy, immunosuppression, or bleeding/clotting disorders.
 - If your pet is pregnant, I kindly request that any acupuncture sessions be postponed until your pet is no longer pregnant.

- **Is there anything else I can do to prepare for the appointment?**
 - Your pet should be clean and dry prior to the appointment as we do not want to place needles in dirty areas. Please make sure any skin wounds or external tumors are made known prior to treatment.
 - If you or anyone who may bring your pet to appointments is uncomfortable with needles, please let us know so that we can have appropriate staff available during your pet's appointment if you or your pet's caretaker is unable to be present as owners may be asked to help restrain/monitor during treatments.
 - At this time, owners can be present for acupuncture appointments, however if you or anyone in your home is suffering from a respiratory illness, we please ask that you reschedule, or wait outside while your pet receives therapy; please contact us in advance so we can provide necessary staff to assist with your pet's appointment.
 - We kindly ask that you notify us prior to 48 hours of your appointment if you need to cancel or reschedule, so that we may offer the spot to another patient as our appointments are in extremely high demand. Failure to do so may result in being charged for the appointment. Repeated no show or cancellation less than 48 hours prior to appointments will result in cancellation of future appointments, and full appointment deposit to make further appointments.
 - Please reach out with *ANY* questions or concerns in advance of your pet's acupuncture appointments (records@tcrehab.com, 952.224.9354).