

FITNESS GOOP: This won't hurt a bit (really)



By WE Vancouver

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I was recently asked how to convince someone who's afraid of needles to give acupuncture a try. My usual answer is that acupuncture isn't painful, which is usually what most people fear the most about the treatment. Truth is, I like to call it "ahhhhhcupuncture," because most patients fall asleep during their treatments.

But, if that's not enough to assuage the fear of needles, I suggest having the reluctant prospective patient contact a registered doctor of traditional Chinese medicine.

Maybe there's a non-needle approach that can be suggested: herbs, supplements, lifestyle changes, dietary suggestions, to name a few.

For others, explaining the difference between an acupuncture needle and a hypodermic (injection) needle makes the process less frightening.

An average hypodermic needle could fit between 10-40 acupuncture needles inside.

Plus, an acupuncture needle does not push in or pull out any fluid — which is often what you feel more than the injection needle itself. Another major difference: an acupuncture needle is shaped differently.

This shape allows it to glide easily through tissue with less disruption and thus less (or no) pointy needle sensation.

If you are willing to try just one needle you may be surprised. I've told a number of my patients that I will start with a single acupuncture needle and I would immediately take it out and not continue if it hurt or they didn't like the sensation. Each one has let me continue. One of my "acuphobe" patients now calls the acupuncture needles "happy sticks" because she no longer thinks of them as needles.

Dr. Melissa Carr for FitnessGoop.ca

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