

Cupping Therapy

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Cupping as it is known is the use of glass cups to create suction on the skin of the patient.

This treatment has been practiced for thousands of years in China. Fire is ignited and placed inside the cup to expel the air, thereby creating a negative pressure when placed on the skin. More modern cups use manual pumps to create a suction once placed on the skin of the patient.



The earliest records of cupping date back to the Han Dynasty, with historical records showing the Egyptians and Greeks using this healing art. Although cupping has been used throughout the world at one time or another, it is still used today in many cultures.

In ancient times of China, the cupping method is called the horn method because horns were used to hold the suction. Today there are various types of cups used, which vary from ceramic bamboo, plastic and glass cups including jars if necessary.

The main benefits of cupping include the regulation of Qi and Blood in the context of traditional Chinese medicine. The effect of this therapy can be classified into two categories: the general improvement of circulatory functions, and local functions (removal of pain, relaxation of stiff muscles, etc.). Chronic joint rheumatism is one of the conditions for which cupping therapy is effective.

On muscles, it has a remarkable effect by removing congested blood, resulting in decreased stiffness in the muscles. Cupping therapy is generally used to treat common cold, pain of the back or lumbar region, rheumatics, abdominal pain, gastralgia, dyspepsia, headache, hypertension, cough, pain caused by menstruation, venomous snake and insect bites and dermatosis, just to name a few conditions.

Cupping is used by acupuncturists as a treatment in combination to needle therapy or it can be used in “needle-less” treatments if the patient is not tolerant of acupuncture needles, if the treatment warrants its use.

The cups are left on the area for 5-15 minutes. If the cup is big or with a strong suction, the time of retaining is reduced. Likewise, if the method is applied to the area where the muscle is thin or when it is in summer time, the duration of retention is also shortened.

A single cup is applied when the affected area is small or the tenderness point is relatively confined. Several cups can be applied where the affected area is broad. For example, the back, lumbar and buttock region and shoulder. When several cups are applied you may notice that the cups are lined in an orderly and moderate distance from each other.

What will be noticed once the cups are removed, are red-blue marks where the cups created suction on the skin. This local discoloration is normal and is the result of the suction produced by the cups, and will soon disappear in a few days.

The benefits of cupping are multifold. Cupping regulates the flow of Qi (energy) and blood. It helps to draw out and eliminate pathogenic factors such as wind, cold, damp and heat. Cupping also moves Qi and blood and opens the pores of the skin, thus precipitating the removal of pathogens through the skin itself.