

# What is Chinese Medicine?

**Chinese medicine** is a unique medical system with a written history that traces back more than 2,000 years and that has been practiced even longer. Chinese medicine acknowledges that there is a vital life force called **qi**<sup>1</sup> that flows through all things.

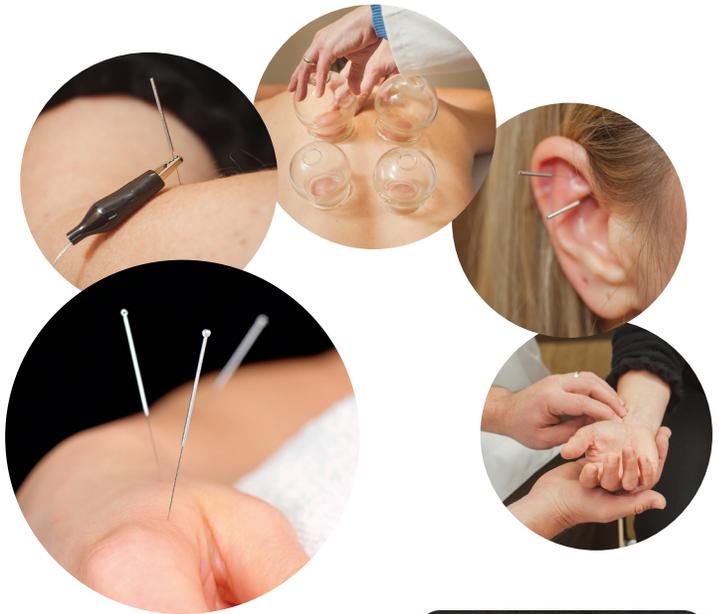
Qi flows along pathways in the human body that correspond to the organs, muscular system and nervous system. When the balance of this energy is disturbed due to poor diet, medication, stress, hereditary conditions, environmental factors or emotional issues, pain or illness results.

**Chinese medicine focuses on correcting these imbalances and stimulating the body's natural ability to heal itself.**

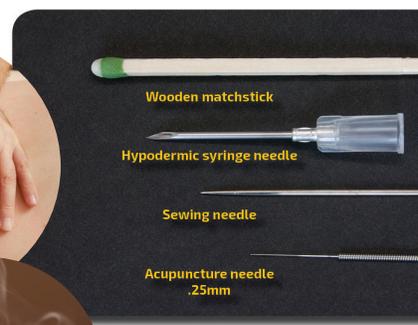
Today, Chinese medicine is used for preventative care, health maintenance and the treatment of certain diseases. Licensed acupuncturists work in individual private practices, while others work in public health programs, hospitals, integrative clinics, group treatment clinics or mental health settings.

- **Acupuncture** – Points on the body are connected by pathways called meridians. Acupuncturists insert thin needles into the skin at different points to access and redirect the qi.
- **Chinese herbal medicine** utilizes natural substances such as leaves, roots, bark, flowers, fruit and minerals. Chinese herbs are administered as a formula to balance the patient's energy.
- **Therapeutic massage – Tuina** is a Chinese style of massage that utilizes kneading, pressing, rolling, shaking and stretching to treat musculoskeletal problems and improve the functions of channels, internal organs, tendons, bones and joints. **Shiatsu** is a Japanese style that seeks to enhance the flow of qi by stimulating pressure points with fingers, hands and arms.
- **Moxibustion** is an external heat therapy using the herb Ai Ye (mugwort), or **moxa**, which is used to heat and tonify the body.
- **Gua Sha** involves scraping the skin with a broad, flat instrument, increasing qi and blood flow to the area.

- **Electro-acupuncture** involves small electrodes clipped to placed acupuncture needles. A low current then stimulates the body.
- **Cupping** is a suction therapy used to draw out pathogens and increase qi and blood flow to an area.



## How small is an acupuncture needle?



More than a dozen acupuncture needles can fit in a hollow syringe needle!



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<sup>1</sup>Qi (pronounced chee) is an East Asian term whose meaning changes with context. In medicine, qi can mean breath, a substance which flows through the acupuncture meridians, or the vital movements necessary and present in every living system.