



WHAT IS CUPPING?

Cupping is a method of applying acupressure by creating a vacuum next to the patient's skin. In traditional Chinese medicine it involves placing glass, bamboo, earthenware or silicone cups on the skin to create suction. Cupping is used to treat pain in the back, neck and shoulders, and other types of musculoskeletal pain. It is also used to relieve respiratory diseases, such as asthma, and may have other applications as well.

During cupping, the clinician creates a vacuum by heating the cups and placing them on the skin or by using a device to apply them. As the air in the cup cools, a vacuum forms that pulls up on the skin, stimulating the acupressure effect. The cups are usually bell-shaped with a capacity of about four fluid ounces.

This technique, in varying forms, has also been used in the Far East, Greece, Cyprus, Mexico, Russia and Iran, where it is called bod-kesh meaning 'pull with air.' Cupping was also commonly used as an Eastern European Jewish folk remedy under the Yiddish name bankes.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF CUPPING?

Cupping may cause minor discomfort while it's being performed and leaves red circular marks that last a few days. However, it can also result in a long-lasting feeling of relaxation and invigoration. Cupping often follows the point selection pattern that is used for standard acupuncture therapy, with somewhat greater emphasis on the back. Cupping is frequently applied after treatment by acupuncture.

ABOUT US

The Medical Acupuncture Service is part of the Department of Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital. Led by Yuan-Chi Lin, MD, MPH, and Cynthia Tung, MD, MPH, our doctors are fully licensed in Western medicine and also have thorough training in acupuncture as a specialty practice. The service provides care for children and young adults to help them manage a variety of acute and chronic pain as well as non-pain-related illnesses through acupuncture. We offer services through our inpatient facility at the Boston Children's Longwood Campus and our outpatient Medical Acupuncture Clinic at Boston Children's Waltham location. The majority of patients come weekly for 4 to 6 weeks.

For inpatient appointments:

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For outpatient appointments:

Boston Children's at Waltham
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