

# Chronic Back Pain

Understanding your pain and how acupuncture can provide lasting relief

## WHAT IS CHRONIC BACK PAIN?

Chronic back pain is discomfort in the back lasting 12 weeks or more, often persisting even after an initial injury or underlying cause has been treated. It affects roughly 16 million adults in the US and is the leading cause of disability worldwide. It can involve muscles, nerves, discs, or the bones of the spine — and often has no single identifiable cause.

## HOW CAN ACUPUNCTURE HELP?

- Stimulates the release of endorphins and enkephalins — the body's natural pain-relieving chemicals — reducing pain signals along the spine.
- Reduces inflammation in surrounding tissues by modulating prostaglandin and cytokine activity, a mechanism confirmed in multiple clinical trials.
- Relaxes tight muscles and improves local circulation, addressing the muscular tension that often perpetuates chronic pain cycles.
- A 2017 analysis in JAMA Internal Medicine (pooled data from 20,827 patients) found acupuncture produced statistically significant and clinically meaningful reductions in back pain compared to both sham and no-treatment controls.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

An initial session includes a thorough intake about your pain location, quality, and triggers. Your practitioner will insert fine needles (typically 6–16) in the back, legs, and hands, leaving them in place for 20–30 minutes. Most patients notice a decrease in pain intensity within 2–4 sessions. A typical course for chronic back pain is 6–12 weekly treatments, with many patients achieving lasting relief after completing a full course.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PRACTITIONER

- 1 Which acupuncture points will you use for my specific type of back pain, and why?
- 2 Should I combine acupuncture with physical therapy or other treatments for best results?
- 3 How will we measure progress, and at what point do we reassess the plan?

