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## Medical Acupuncture for Your Pets

### What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is the insertion and manipulation of very fine sterile needles into specific points on the body. The stimulation of these points target the nerves, blood vessels, and connective tissue that course through the body to treat many medical conditions. Each acupuncture treatment is tailored to your pet's unique situation based on medical history and careful physical examination specifically targeting the body's neurologic and musculoskeletal systems. Acupuncture is a powerful therapy that can be used in combination with standard medical treatment to help your pet.

### How does it work?

Acupuncture alleviates pain, reduces inflammation, increases blood and lymph flow locally, relieves myofascial trigger points, modulates nerve traffic in the spinal cord, and enhances the balance between the sympathetic (stress response) and parasympathetic (rest response) nervous systems.

Acupuncture is a drug-free method of neuromodulation, a process where the body is encouraged to “dial up” or “dial down” various parts of the nervous system to achieve a natural balance between stress and rest responses. Whether your pet has an acute injury, a chronic disease, or needs strengthening of their overall well-being, acupuncture can help correct these imbalances.

Noticeable “real-life” effects of acupuncture include improved nerve function, muscle and fascia relaxation, improved circulation and healing, control of pain and inflammation, and better mood and quality of life for your pet.

### What conditions can be treated?

Although nearly any medical issue can benefit in some way from acupuncture treatment, common conditions that respond well to acupuncture include:

**Arthritis** (including osteoarthritis, hip dysplasia, and cruciate ligament disease)

**Allergies** (itchy dogs, ear infections, lick granulomas)

**Behavioral issues** (generalized anxiety)

**Voiding dysfunction** (constipation, fecal and urinary incontinence)

**Post-operative/trauma** (wound management, pain control, physical therapy)

**Chronic pain** (from injury, surgery, disease process)

**Neurologic issues** (IVDD, Degenerative Myelopathy, peripheral nerve paralysis)

### Does acupuncture hurt?

Most patients find acupuncture treatment enjoyable and relaxing. We strive to maintain a relaxed and calm environment for our patients undergoing acupuncture treatment. Some pets will even fall asleep during a treatment session.

**Possible side effects?**

Acupuncture has been used for thousands of years and is generally regarded as a safe and gentle procedure. When acupuncture is administered by a trained medical professional, it is extremely safe. On rare occasions, some patients may seem a little worse immediately after their treatment, but within a day or two, this passes and the benefits of treatment are seen.

**What is a typical treatment like?**

An initial acupuncture session takes some time for Dr. LoMonaco to get to know your pet's individual situation. Dr. LoMonaco will perform a complete physical exam including a specialized exam to evaluate your pet's musculoskeletal system to appropriately diagnose your pet's issues.

Dr. LoMonaco is specially trained in myofascial palpation and muscle trigger point diagnosis. This allows her to create a map to identify regions of restriction and pain, which directs attention to specific joints or body parts to generate a targeted acupuncture treatment. These techniques, along with medical massage, are performed during the physical exam and often relaxes patients.

Once a treatment map is created, needles are inserted into specific points to best treat your pet. In many cases, the first treatment is targeted to relax and calm your pet by dialing down the stress response and dialing up the rest response. Most initial treatments will only involve 2 or 3 needles as your pet gets used to acupuncture treatments. During the session, Dr. LoMonaco will continue to assess your pet's responses and target the treatment accordingly. The session will end with the removal of all needles from your pet. Recommendations of followup appointments and home care will be discussed.

Subsequent acupuncture sessions will be similar to the initial visit, but are generally shorter in length. A brief, but thorough, physical exam will be performed and the acupuncture treatment will be tailored accordingly. These sessions typically last between 15 and 30 minutes.

The number of treatments will vary based on your pet's unique situation. Normally patients receive two to three treatments in the first two weeks. After that, the frequency of treatments will be tapered based on your pet's response to treatment. Treatments may be as frequent as once per week, once per month, or on an as needed basis.

Don't hesitate to learn more. Dr. LoMonaco is happy to address any questions or concerns you may have regarding medical acupuncture!