

SAN ANTONIO

MAGAZINE

**Dr. Ian
Thompson**

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LIVING WELL

Food for thought on
health and wellness
in the new year



This Won't Hurt a Bit

Ancient healing practice of acupuncture offers relief from most modern ailments

The first question many ask about acupuncture is if it hurts. "No, it doesn't hurt," says **Cecilia Hsing Gulyas, a third-generation traditional Chinese medicine doctor and acupuncturist.** "When done correctly, it feels almost like an energy flow," she says of the sensation her patients report at her **Acucare Solutions** practice.

The traditional Asian practice of inserting thin needles into specific points along the body's meridians promotes health and wellbeing. In the United States, **Gulyas** says acupuncture is most often used for chronic pain management, however, the World Health Organization recognizes it as a treatment for ailments ranging from headaches and toothaches to rheumatoid arthritis.

Gulyas also believes acupuncture can help alleviate certain emotional troubles. Though she says many patients want treatment for a single issue, acupuncture is a holistic medicine that works with the entire body. Every patient is different, but most at her practice will be prescribed a series of 30-minute sessions. While some may initially be uncomfortable with the porcupine look, according to **Gulyas**, after a couple of sessions many are able to relax into a semi-meditative state for the duration of the treatment. Some even come back when they don't have any health issues. "It's also good for balance," she says.

▶▶ ACUCARE SOLUTIONS

15321 San Pedro Ave., Ste. 106 // 545-0000
acucare-acupuncture.com



WE RECOMMEND:

▶▶ THE WOODHOUSE DAY SPA

woodhousespas.com for locations

Volcanic Stone Massage: Popular in the winter months for its use of heated stones. (80 minutes, \$160)

Swedish Massage: A classic stress-relieving massage that is the spa's most popular. (50 minutes, \$95)

▶▶ MOKARA HOTEL AND SPA

212 W. Crocket St. // 396-584 // mokarahotelsandspas.com

Raspberry Jasmine Body Event: Compressed apricot seeds refresh skin. Raspberry-jasmine syrup hydrates. (50-80 minutes, \$150-\$225)

Restoration Massage: A Spanish rosemary massage, followed by healing arnica gel and warm towel compresses. (80 minutes, \$190)

▶▶ MESSAGE HEIGHTS

Messageheightssanantonio.com for locations

Membership: The national franchise offers membership service for clients who make massage a part of their wellness routine. Sports massage, Swedish massage, deep-tissue massage and other classic techniques are part of the package, along with facials, aromatherapy and little extras they call "elevations."

Feeling Kneaded

The health benefits of a well-done massage are practically boundless. Touted for everything from improving circulation and flexibility to relieving headaches and stress to expelling toxins, a regularly scheduled rubdown is a wellness essential.

▶▶ MOM'EASE PREGNANCY MASSAGE NEVA Face + Body 601 E. Dewey Place // 734-6382 // nevafaceandbody.com

Taking wellness advice can be difficult for new or expectant mothers, with so many do's, don'ts and old wives' tales to sift through. "The most popular is that a foot massage can induce labor," says Neva Fernandez, owner of NEVA Face + Body. "My goodness! If that were true, I would have a line around the block and I'd be very, very rich."

Here's one you *can* bank on: a prenatal or postpartum massage can do wonders, if it's specialized for mommy bodies and performed by a certified masseuse.

NEVA provides a mini MOM'ease Postpartum Massage that's part of Baptist Health Systems' "health program" and is offered free to every woman who delivers at North Central Baptist Hospital, explains Fernandez, a massage instructor at St. Philips College and former PCA Skin

educator. A pregnancy massage increases blood and oxygen flow, and nutrients to the womb. It reduces stress hormone levels and increases dopamine and serotonin levels. Low levels of these hormones are associated with depression. Increased circulation helps reduce swelling in the joints and removes waste. "The nurturing touch of massage is very important," Fernandez says. "Emotional stress is often experienced along with this very exciting time for expecting mothers."

Massage, she says, is no longer a luxury—something to do while on vacation. "I often use this analogy: People take better care of their cars than their bodies. We change the oil every three months, maintain water, coolants and check the air in our tires. Why? So it doesn't break down. Yet we don't do regular maintenance for our body."