

## Orthological/Neurological Pain

### **Cupping: How Gwyneth Paltrow Got Her Spots**

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Film star Gwyneth Paltrow caused quite a stir when she showed up at New York film premiere with round marks on her back from an acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) treatment. The photo was featured on the cover of The New York Post, putting Chinese Medicine at the center of attention.



The marks on the actress's back were caused by an ancient form of alternative medicine called "cupping." In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, she explained, "... They take these little glass cups and they heat them up and they put them on your back. ... Those [marks] correspond to my lungs, those [marks] correspond to my breasts. And if you have stagnation, any kind of toxicity in the corresponding organ, it pulls the stagnation and the toxicity out through that point."

Cupping is a technique in which a glass cup or bamboo jar is suctioned onto the body and allowed to sit for about 10 minutes. Cupping stimulates the flow of blood, lymph, and Qi to the affected area; relieves swelling; and greatly enhances an acupuncture or electroacupuncture treatment. Its uses include relieving muscle pain, especially back pain from stiffness or injury; and clearing congestion in the chest, which can occur with common colds and influenza.

"It feels amazing and it's very relaxing, and it feels terrific," Paltrow told Winfrey. "It's just one of the alternative medicines that I do instead of taking antibiotics."

Gwyneth Paltrow, a longtime advocate of the benefits of acupuncture and Oriental medicine, once said that having acupuncture had guided her to a "new level" in life, helping her to find love with her husband and giving her the strength to cope with the death of her father.

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"I have been a big fan of Chinese medicine for a long time because it works," Paltrow said.

### **How Cupping Works**

Cupping is usually incorporated into an acupuncture or bodywork treatment, but can be used alone. The practitioner takes a glass cup or bamboo jar, roughly the size of a jar of baby food, and ignites a small flame inside the cup, creating a vacuum. The cup is then quickly applied to the body, drawing the skin up a few millimeters into the cup. This suction stimulates the flow of blood, lymph, and Qi to the affected area. The suction can leave red marks on the skin that last a few days.

Each cupping session lasts approximately 10 to 15 minutes and it can be repeated, once the marks have cleared, until the condition is resolved.

Desiree Potter had acupuncture and cupping for a crick in her neck. She tells Acufinder: "I must have slept wrong. When I woke up I couldn't turn my neck. I went to see an acupuncturist who used cupping. By the end of the treatment I could move my neck again, and after one more appointment, the pain was completely gone and I had full range of motion."

Potter says that cupping has a sensation all its own. "It kind of feels like the opposite of a massage because your skin and muscles are being sucked up instead of pushed down," she says. "But it felt great and was very relaxing."

And the red marks? "The cups did leave dark red marks on my back that lasted for a few days, but they did not hurt. I would definitely get cupping again!"