

Cupping

Cupping is a traditional therapy widely used in Asian countries for centuries to treat pain and inflammation as well as to promote circulation and relaxation. While different types of cups may be used (e.g. glass, plastic, earthenware), Chinese Hospital East West Health uses glass cups of various sizes to provide “fire cupping”. With fire cupping, a cotton ball is dipped in alcohol and then lit on fire and held inside the cup to create a vacuum inside the cup. The cup is then applied to the skin, where it suctions onto the surface of the skin. The cup(s) may be left in one place, or may be moved around the surface of the skin with the application and aid of massage oil. The whole procedure typically takes between 5-10 minutes, depending on the number and use of cups.

It is common for cupping to leave circular marks on the surface of the skin due to suction from the cups. The marks can range from light pink to deep purple, and typically fade within a few days to a week. Patients often ask if cupping is painful. However, most patients who receive cupping feel that it is relaxing, and rarely, if ever, painful. After cupping treatment, patients are encouraged to rest, drink warm water and avoid showering for 8 hours in order to maximize the benefit of treatment.

From a practice standpoint, cupping is mainly used for three main purposes: to release muscle tension; to draw out toxins; and to serve as a further diagnostic tool to identify patterns and causes of disharmony. When used for diagnostic purposes, the acupuncturist examines the marks created by the cupping, any condensation left in the cup, and sensations reported by the patient following cupping. For example, the color of the marks made from cupping may indicate a pattern of blood stasis = dark purple; dampness/cold = blue; inflammation/muscle tension = red dots.

Cupping can be used for many conditions, including muscular tension and fatigue, arthritis pain, high blood pressure, stroke, headache, neck pain, frozen shoulder, tendinitis, asthma, allergy, common cold, flu and more.