

## The Effect of Acupuncture

It is **important for patients to understand** the effect of acupuncture after each treatment session. Many patients get discouraged after one or two treatments and decided that acupuncture is not right for them. However, for those who are patience and give this medicine a chance, they will benefit the most.

Traditional Chinese medicine is difficult to describe in a few words, it is sometimes helpful to use a metaphor. Thus, I like to use a metaphor to describe the effect of acupuncture treatments so that everyone can understand. The effect of acupuncture is similar to the effect of water on a forest fire.

Because I was once a damage control officer on a naval warship (fire/flooding), I can comment on this topic. In a forest fire or any fire, the goal is to break down the fire triangle (fuel, combustible material, and heat) by using water or other firefighting agent. As you spray water onto the fire, the effect of water is very minute initially. As you continue spraying, you will notice a reduction in the size of the fire. Eventually, the fire will be out! At this point you have disrupted the fire triangle. However, the fire triangle can reform and cause a reflash. If you stop spraying water immediately after the fire is out, you will **risk a reflash** because the basic element of the fire is still present (fuel, combustible material, and heat). Reflash is most likely to occur and that is why you need to continue spraying a bit longer even after fire is out. By continuing to spray, you will saturate the combustible material with water and reduce the heat content to a point where it can no longer cause a reflash. Firefighting efforts can stop.

Acupuncture works in the same way. The effect of acupuncture **is cumulative** after each session. Sometimes, after one session, patients would feel much better (depending on the condition) just like a fire that can be reduced with application of some water. Sometimes, especially chronic conditions, you would not notice any change after one treatment just like a large fire still same size after application of some water. However, if you continue acupuncture treatment on a regular basis, you will begin to notice the effect just like if you continue to spray water on a fire, you will notice a reduction in size of the fire. Continued treatment will result in improvements in your condition and eventually eliminate the problem. In other words, **there is an end to acupuncture treatments**.

If acupuncture treatment is stopped for extended period of time (varies by conditions and by individual patients), the cumulative effect of acupuncture will also be reduced. Thus, you should continue treatment until the effect of acupuncture **can sustain itself** and at which point **no more treatment** is required.