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# Does Blue Cross Blue Shield Cover Acupuncture?

September 18, 2022

## In this article...

- Find out if your Blue Cross Blue Shield plan covers acupuncture services and learn more about what to expect from using acupuncture to treat chronic disorders.



**Acupuncture** (<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/acupuncture/about/pac-20392763>) is becoming an increasingly more common benefit offered by insurance providers. In recent years, the practice has grown in popularity across the United States as a safe, affordable and successful treatment of pain and musculoskeletal disorders. Medical professionals may recommend acupuncture to treat a variety of conditions, particularly chronic back, neck or knee pain.

Click below to shop for Blue Cross Blue Shield plans in your area that may cover acupuncture. Or, continue reading to learn more about how acupuncture coverage may differ in your state.

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## Does Blue Cross Blue Shield Cover Acupuncture?

Generally speaking, Blue Cross Blue Shield covers acupuncture services; however, coverage limitations differ from state to state.

Whether you've been prescribed acupuncture treatment by a medical professional or are considering it of your own accord, it's important to look into Blue Cross acupuncture coverage laws that correspond with your specific state.

For example, Blue Cross Blue Shield has offered coverage for acupuncture services to all **Massachusetts members** (<https://www.mcphs.edu/about-mcphs/news/acupuncture-gains-coverage#:~:text=In%20October%20of%202019%2C%20Blue%20Cross%20Blue%20Shield,one%20of%20the%20first%20to%20offer>) (with the exception of **Medicare Advantage policyholders** (</medicaid/medicaid-does-medicare-cover-acupuncture>)) as of January 1, 2020. While a network provider must perform services to obtain coverage, a referral or medical diagnosis is not necessary, and the cost-share is equal to an outpatient office visit with a specialist. **In Minnesota**, (<https://www.bluecrossmn.com/health-plans-101/alternative-medicine-whats-safe-and-whats-covered>) however, only certain Blue Cross plans cover acupuncture treatment, and it must be medically necessary and prescribed by your doctor.



# What Are the Risks of Acupuncture?

While the risks associated with acupuncture are fairly low, treatment can cause **serious side effects** (<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/156488#:~:text=The%20possible%20risks,an%20internal%20organ.>) if not administered properly. These side effects can vary from infection and bleeding to punctured organs and injury to the central nervous system. You should avoid acupuncture if you:

- **Have a pacemaker.** Electrical impulses may interfere with treatment.
- **Are pregnant.** In some cases, acupuncture has induced labor prematurely.
- **Have a bleeding disorder or take blood thinners.** These may increase your chances of bruising or excessive bleeding.

## What Can You Expect During Acupuncture Treatment?

During your first appointment, the practitioner will ask about your symptoms and examine parts of your body where you're experiencing pain. This is how they determine where needles will be placed during treatment. You'll be asked to lie on a padded table, possibly under a gown or sheet. Once you're comfortable, the practitioner will place anywhere between 5 to 20 needles under your skin.

As you relax, the practitioner may gently read just the needles or apply heat or mild electrical pulses to them. The needles will be removed after 10 to 20 minutes. Depending upon your symptoms, you may need more than one appointment; some conditions require as many as six to eight treatments.

To find out if acupuncture is right for your condition, talk with your doctor and read reviews of local network providers.

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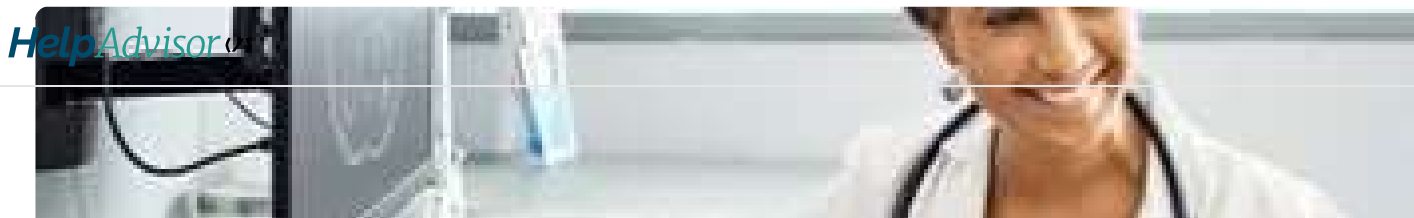
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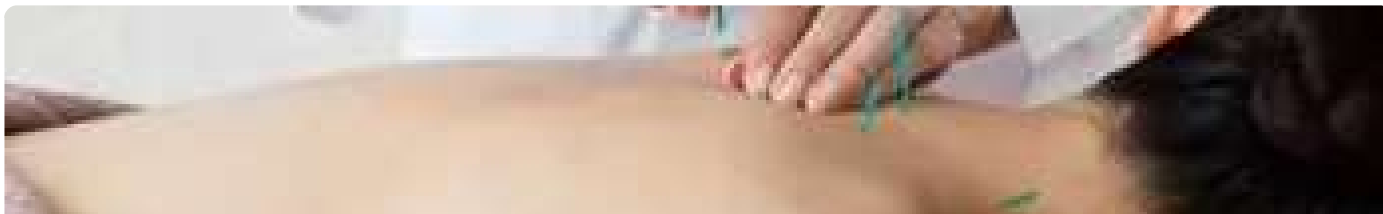
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