

# Chen's Acupuncture & Chinese Medicine Clinic, P.S.

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## *A Note About Our Billing Codes*

Acupuncture is a highly individualized form of healthcare given the underlying philosophy that attributes every person with their own distinctive pattern of Qi. During your first visit the acupuncturist will both discuss your impressions of your health and make physical observations about your health. This is done through examining your pulse, tongue, color, posture, and other attributes. From conversation and examination, the acupuncturist is able to develop a unique treatment plan to fit your specific symptoms. This individualized care is the hallmark of acupuncture treatment and is one of the key reasons behind why acupuncture therapy is so effective. Creating a unique treatment plan for every one of our patients also means that our office must confront unique insurance policies and rules. For many of our patients, medical billing is confusing and we hope to make the process as transparent as possible. Please let us know immediately if you or have questions or concerns about either your treatment or your treatment bill. We hope to remedy all issues that may arise in the treatment and billing process as quickly as possible so that we can get to our real task: helping you to heal.

## Acupuncture

**Purpose:** Acupuncture is probably the reason for your visit with us today! More information about acupuncture is available on our website and in the library in our Bellevue clinic.

**Insurance Policies:** In January of 2005, the American Medical Association established a new policy for billing acupuncture. Whereas previously there was one CPT code for acupuncture without electrical stimulation, 97780, this code has been split into two. For a single acupuncture appointment, we are now required to bill 97810 and 97811. The American Medical Association felt that this change was necessary in order to more accurately reflect the practice of acupuncture. The two codes can be thought of as the first, putting the needles in, and the second, taking the needles out. Although we now bill two codes for one session, we do not receive an increased payment from any insurance company, nor do we charge our patients more. This split also occurred with the CPT code for acupuncture with electrical stimulation which became 97813 and 97814.

## Heat Lamps

**Purpose:** A common element in most treatment plans is the use of infrared heat lamp. Treating patients with infrared is within the scope of our practice and we believe that it is often an important element in improving patient well-being. Therapeutically, the infrared heat lamp is used to restore balance to 'cold' conditions such as contractions, spasms, and pain that are indicative of stagnation. The heat from the lamp improves blood circulation and breaks up and/or moves areas of stagnation. Additionally, the warmth of the lamp is comforting and

### *A Note About Our Billing Codes continued...*

relaxes the patient, which increases the positive impact of the acupuncture needles. An easy analogy is the common use of a heat pack on a sore joint.

**Insurance Policies:** Patients should be advised that infrared treatment is accounted by insurance companies as a physical therapy modality, not an acupuncture modality. The CPT code is 97026 and the charge is \$15.00. Because the code represents physical therapy, many adjusters will process heat lamps differently than acupuncture. So, for example, if a patient has a co-pay they may be expected to pay their co-pay and some additional amount as well for the heat lamp. For insurance plans which allow only a certain number of visits per year for 'alternative medicine' (grouping together chiropractors, acupuncturists, physical therapists, naturopaths, etc) the use of a heat lamp during the treatment counts as both an acupuncture and a physical therapy visit. Frequently heat lamps are subject to a deductible even when acupuncture is not. This issue does not impact all patients, so please raise any concerns about how your treatment will be billed early in the process or, once you have received your bill, please let us know if you have any questions.

### **Tuina**

**Purpose:** Tuina is a combination of deep-tissue massage and acupressure, designed to treat areas of stagnation and blockages along the meridians of the body and stimulate the flow of energy to promote healing and restore the balance necessary for the body to naturally heal itself. Tuina is frequently used in treatments for chronic pain, musculoskeletal conditions and stress-related disorders.

**Insurance Policies:** Similarly to heat lamps, tuina treatment is accounted by insurance companies as a physical therapy modality, not an acupuncture modality. The CPT code is 97140 and the charge is \$35.00. As a physical therapy modality, some insurance companies will expect patients to cover a portion of the cost of tuina in addition to the patient co-pay for acupuncture treatment. Some insurance companies may calculate a tuina treatment joined with an acupuncture treatment as two visits toward the allocated annual visits for 'alternative medicine' and/or calculate the treatment towards deductible. Since this issue is not common to all our patients, please let us know in advance if you have concerns about our billing process, or if you have any questions about your particular treatment bill.

### **Thank You For Your Attention!**

While we believe strongly in the treatment plans developed by our acupuncturists, we understand that some patients are not comfortable with the use of infra-red and tuina due to the various insurance issues and we understand that medical billing is confusing in general.

Acupuncture is about you: your body and your healing. Help us to assist you as effectively as possible by sharing with us any questions or concerns you might have about acupuncture treatment and billing so that we may address them in as timely a manner as possible.

*--Chen's Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine, P.S.*