

*Kath Bartlett, MS, LAc*

Asheville Center for Chinese Medicine  
70 Woodfin Place Suite West Wing Two  
Asheville, North Carolina 28801 828.258.2777  
[kbartlett@AcupunctureAsheville.com](mailto:kbartlett@AcupunctureAsheville.com)  
[www.AcupunctureAsheville.com](http://www.AcupunctureAsheville.com)

31

*Acupuncture  
Chinese Herbology  
Nutritional and Lifestyle Counseling*

## WHAT IS MOXIBUSTION?



Moxibustion (moxa) is a treatment that involves applying heat to a specific area of the body, usually acupuncture points. Moxa has been utilized by Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) practitioners for over 10,000 years, used in combination with acupuncture since its inception. In fact, many TCM textbooks are entitled 'Acupuncture and Moxibustion', emphasizing the importance of moxa in the acupuncture treatment. Acupuncturist's can use moxibustion to activate an acupuncture point, rather than employing a needle.

Moxa was first used in northern China, where practitioners discovered that the cold climate was causing many health problems. Warming acupuncture points was found effective in treating many diseases that developed in this cold part of the country. The term Moxibustion is derived from the Japanese term "Moe Kusa" which means 'burning herb'. Mugwort (*Folium Artemisia Vulgaris*), a species of chrysanthemum, is chosen because it burns at a very high temperature, 670°C. Ai ye (the Chinese name of the herb) is often used in Chinese herbal medicine. Its therapeutic functions include warming the womb, dispersing cold and pain, and stopping bleeding.

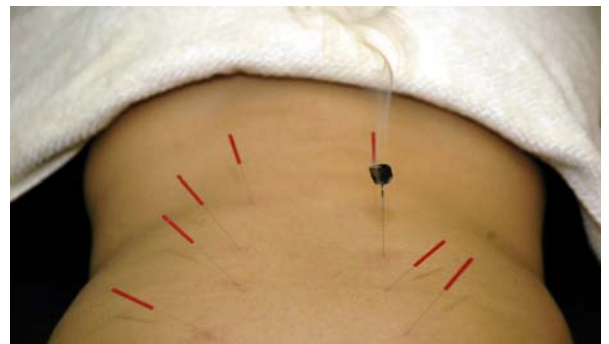
## WHEN IS MOXIBUSTION APPROPRIATE?

Moxa is often used to treat pain conditions, or chronic disorders, such as:

- Arthritis and rheumatic pain
- Joint, muscle and back pain
- Abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting
- Menstrual disorders and pain
- Fatigue and immune support

## METHODS OF MOXIBUSTION

Moxa can be administered either directly or indirectly. Indirect moxa involves the use of a moxa roll, which looks like a large cigar, and is used to warm various acupuncture points, either in the local area of the complaint, or distal points with functions that treat the disorder. The roll is held at a safe distance from the skin for a period of five to fifteen minutes. Alternatively, the rolls may be burned in a wooden 'moxa box', which is placed on the affected area, such as the low back or abdomen (for menstrual cramping). A third method involves placing a small mound, or cone, of moxa on a slice of ginger or garlic pierced with holes, which is set on a particular acupuncture point or on the navel, which may also be filled with salt. Generally three to five cones are burned. Another often used method involves burning a small lump of moxa on the acupuncture needle.



Direct moxa refers to a small piece of moxa, rolled into a cone the size of a grain of rice. The 'rice cone' is placed on the acupuncture point, to which burn cream has previously been applied. The moxa is lit with a piece of incense, and is burned until the patient feels the heat, at which point the remaining moxa is immediately removed.