

Negative Pressure Cupping ~ Suction Cup Therapy ~ Cupping Massage

This ancient technique is found in the western world of complimentary medical treatment. Massage cupping is a modified version of cupping therapy, used in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), and the results that this simple treatment produces are impressive. Through suction and negative pressure, massage cupping releases rigid soft tissue; drains excess fluids and toxins; loosens adhesions and lifts connective tissue; and brings blood flow to stagnant skin and muscles.

The therapeutic applications of cupping have been documented through several thousand years of clinical experience. Cupping is used extensively in TCM and has now been adapted for other health-care modalities, including massage therapy and chiropractic. Massage cupping intensifies the therapeutic aspect of traditional cupping.

A Bit of History ~ The specific origin of Cupping Therapy remains in obscurity - the consensus is that the action of suction has been part of therapeutic efforts throughout human history, migrating with the human tribes. These ancient cultures used hollowed out animal horns, bones, bamboo, nuts, seashells and gourds to purge bites, pustules, infections and skin lesions from the body, and many are still in use today. Ancient healers also used Cupping devices to draw evil spirits out of the body and to balance the humors. Earthenware and iron were created as cupping vessels before the invention of glass.

Cupping therapy was used in Egypt dating back some 3,500 years, where its use is represented in hieroglyphic writing. The earliest recorded use of Cupping is from the famous Taoist alchemist and herbalist, Ge Hong (281–341 A.D.). In ancient Greece, Hippocrates recommended the use of cups for a variety of ailments, while in the early 1900's eminent British physician, Sir Arthur Keith, wrote how he witnessed cupping performed with excellent success. Suction Cup Therapies remained a constant in professional medical treatment throughout Europe. It was practiced by such famous physicians as Galen (131-200AD), Paracelsus(1493-1541), Ambroise Pare (1509-90) and surgeon Charles Kennedy (1826).

In China, extensive research has been carried out on Cupping, and the practice is a mainstay of government-sponsored hospitals of Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). The fundamental therapeutic value of Cupping has been documented through several thousand years of clinical and subjective experience and has advanced its application to many areas.

Although the use of Cupping has remained popular throughout many communities worldwide, the 20th century witnessed its widespread decrease in many Anglo-Saxon societies. Even the North American Indians used Buffalo Horn, seashells, gourds, bones for Cupping, but as their culture was decimated and its people herded into "reservations", their traditions of health and healing were also destroyed.

With this rich history of medical application, how does cupping fit into current health practices? Massage cupping, or the use of cups, held by suction, to massage the body, can be added into almost any massage or bodywork session. The action on the nervous system is sedating, and clients will often experience a deep state of relaxation.



A favorite area for massage cupping is on the broad area of the back. Larger cups are used for this, and a strong vacuum will mimic the rolling action of deep-tissue massage without a lot of discomfort. Some discomfort may be felt when releasing of an adhesion, this is often described as a pinching feeling that subsides as the treatment progresses. The movement may be long and intended to drain fluid, or circular and stimulating for stubborn knots and areas of rigid tissue. The skin will turn red with strong massage cupping, indicating that circulation has been brought to the surface. When a cup is left stationary for more than a few moments a ring or discoloration may occur. These are not bruises.

An increased local blood supply to the muscles and skin will bring nourishment and allow for toxins to be carried away through the veins. Clients often feel deep warmth during the session and a tingling sensation long after the treatment has ended.

Massage cupping is not an irritant to the skin or body. It draws the inflammation out, yet does not add to it. This technique is excellent when used as a contrast therapy with cold compresses or liniments.

A Typical Session~There are two main uses of cupping: stationary and in massage. Stationary cupping is used to clear stagnation of blood; to facilitate the release of pathogenic factors; and to release adhesions. Cups are placed on the skin and left for a few to 20 minutes. Stationary cupping sometimes results in rings and circles on the back as toxins and blood move to the surface. In massage cupping the cups are moved in different directions and patterns depending on the desired results of the treatment. Cups in movement usually only leave the skin flushed for a few hours.

Pressure ~Please keep in contact with your practitioner, if the pressure is uncomfortable in any way it can be adjusted to suit you. Almost all areas of the body may be worked on, including the neck, face, shoulders, middle and low back, stomach, hips, thighs, and sacrum. It is a good idea to start with a medium to light pressure for your first experience and increase slowly.

Cupping Marks ~the suction pulls toxic & stagnant fluids and blood from deep within the tissues to the skin's surface. The color, amount, shape and speed of what emerges vary according to the severity of the body's status. Although the marks look painful and something like a bruise, they are not. Clients typically feel immediate sense of relief, warmth and change.



The western term for this discoloration is Petechia. Petechia is a slight subcutaneous discharge of blood from the vessels. The negative pressure from the cups cause extravasation of blood from the peripheral capillaries and may result in subcutaneous blemishing. The Petechia does not represent capillary rupture as in *Bruising*, as is evidenced by the immediate fading of Petechia and rapid resolution of the marks as compared to bruising. The discolorations fade from hours up to 2 weeks, depending on the amount of stagnation and time of cup placement. The length of time it takes for it to fade indicates the severity and toxicity of the clients' condition, as well as the client's follow-up activities. As treatments accumulate marks will occur less and less. Strong or stationary cups are never used on the throat or face.

Cellulite Treatment ~another profound application of the negative pressure technique is in the treatment of cellulite. The upscale spa industry has a myriad of equipment to choose from to treat cellulite, and Cupping performs many of those same functions manually, and with much less discomfort. Light pressure provides drainage, while the heavier applications can be used to stimulate circulation and loosen the connective tissues or orange peel appearance.

Facial Cupping ~Women in Asia, Russia and Europe have been utilizing these remarkable negative pressure facial exercises for rejuvenation and maintenance for many, many generations. Protocols for the face use the small cups to vacuum and lift the facial tissue, mimicking the pumping movements of lymphatic drainage. It is a manual method that replicates the effects of equipment currently in use in most of the top aesthetic establishments. This procedure alone can be done in a few minutes, or can compliment a longer facial massage for ultimate results.

The benefits include increased local circulation of the skin; increased nutrients brought to the epidermis, and enhanced absorption of facial topicals. The drainage of stagnant fluids from reservoir areas will reduce edema and chronic puffiness. Lines and wrinkles will plump whereas scar tissue will soften from the negative pressure, making it an exceptionally powerful and surprisingly relaxing. The muscles of the face benefit greatly from the reduction of tension and tightness, releasing expression lines and loosening rigid muscles associated with TMJ disorders.

Sinus infections and inflammation are also directly relieved by the loosening and draining effects of the cups - many times resolving issues that many sufferers commonly turned to more radical procedures to correct.

Orthopedic Massage Cupping ~

The goal of Orthopedic Massage is dissolve adhesions: normalize the position of the soft tissue and release its torsion: lengthen the connective tissue: hydrate the joints: facilitate normal neurological function by muscle energy techniques; and release entrapment of the peripheral nerves. These treatments may include [Rotator Cuff Injury](#), [Tennis Elbow](#), [Carpel Tunnel](#), [Bursitis](#), [Tendinitis](#), [Thoracic Outlet Syndrome](#), [Frozen Shoulder Syndrome](#) and [IT Band syndrome](#).