

Glossary of Holistic and Alternative Medicine Terms

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is an alternative medicine modality. It is associated with Traditional Chinese Medicine and is one of the oldest healing practices in the world. Acupuncture involves the stimulation of specific points on the body that are located on channels called meridians. The objective of the stimulation is to correct imbalances in the flow of *qi* through these meridians. This process has the potential to alter biochemical processes and physiological conditions thus initiating an improvement in health. Stimulation is achieved by the insertion of very fine needles into the skin, which may be manipulated manually or by electrical stimulation. Situations in which acupuncture may be helpful for animals include allergies, muscle and joint pain (eg, muscle strains and arthritis), digestive issues, inflammation, nervous system issues, overuse injuries, and stress or anxiety. Acupuncture may also be useful in stimulation of the immune system.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is an alternative medicine modality that uses aromatic or essential oils for their ability to influence mental or physical well being. Aromatherapy can be administered either by inhalation or by topical application of the essential oil to the skin. Most essential oils require dilution in a carrier oil prior to application to the skin. Caution is advised, as some animals may have sensitivities to various oils. Caution is also advised when using essential oils with pregnant animals. Situations in which aromatherapy may be helpful for animals include sleep issues, nausea, nose or throat issues, poor circulation, skin conditions, and stress or anxiety disorders. Aromatherapy may also be useful for stimulation of the immune system.

Ayurvedic Medicine

Ayurvedic medicine originated in India 5000 to 6000 years ago. Ayurveda means the ‘science of life.’ It is based on the beliefs that energy and matter are one and that the microcosm of the individual is a reflection of the macrocosm of the universe (ie, ‘as above, so below’). Ayurvedic medicine addresses both prevention and treatment of disease. Typical treatments for animals include herbal medicines, detoxification, massage, diet, and use of supplements. Situations in which Ayurveda may be helpful for animals include allergies, digestive issues, joint pain, arthritis, nervous system issues, skin conditions, and stress and anxiety disorders. Ayurvedic medicine may also be useful for stimulation of the immune system.