



510.851.3006  
traci@fullmoonbayarea.com  
www.fullmoonbayarea.com  
419 30th Street, Suite 4  
Oakland, CA 94609

# The Art of Cupping

by Susan Johnson, L.Ac.

The ancient art of cupping has been utilized by healers and lay people in many cultures. Cupping is a suction technique designed to pull toxin build up and muscle spasm from the body's deeper tissue to the surface of the skin. The cells of the body use oxygen and give off carbon dioxide; when the energy is blocked, the cell waste or carbon dioxide gets blocked. This is called acid or toxin build up. Physical pain implies a blockage in the flow of energy through a particular area. When toxins or cell waste stagnate in the muscles or joints, it can be very difficult for the body to get rid of this waste, causing further blockage and discomfort. Utilizing cupping techniques we are able, by vacuum or suction, to pull the blockage out of the deeper tissue and move it to the skin's surface. Once on the surface, it is much easier for the body to eliminate toxins through the superficial blood supply or capillary system. In only ten minutes of cupping, not only can we pull toxin build up out of specific areas, but we can also pull the fresh new blood into those areas, which will vitalize and restore proper blood flow.

Cupping is diagnostic as well as therapeutic, and can tell us three basic things. First, cupping tells us exactly where the problem is, as we usually cup an area slightly larger than the painful area, in order to ensure that the area of pain is completely covered. Some skin under the cups will color, and some won't, though the same amount of suction has been used with all cups. Even on the skin under a single cup, part may color while the rest does not. Second, cupping will tell us the kind of problem with which we are dealing, as problems relating to toxin build up or muscle spasm will cause the skin under the cup to color, whereas issues dealing with nerve or bone will not color at all. Third, cupping will tell us the severity of the problem. Light or moderate blockage will cause the skin under a cup to color pink or red, and take a day or two for the color to go away. Severe stagnation can cause the skin to color a deep scarlet, purple, or even black; it may take seven to ten days for the dark color to disperse. All of this information is helpful not only in treating the patient, but in making an accurate diagnosis.

The cupping sensation can be a bit painful for the first sixty seconds, the time during which most of the toxins are removed. It is helpful for the patient to try to relax into the process of being cupped, and to acknowledge and tolerate the pain. It is important for the patient to breathe deeply and slowly. The discomfort usually eases after sixty seconds. Patients who are lying down while receiving cups may even doze a bit.

In cases of pneumonia or asthma small cups may be used on children and infants to break up phlegm congestion in the lungs. Young children will generally tolerate four to six small cups at a time, as long as they are safe and secure in a parent's arms. Older children who have experienced cupping will often ask for cups when they know that they need this kind of treatment.

We can cup someone as long as they continue to color. The first round of cupping will usually remove 80% of the blockage; the residual 20% will be removed during the second round. If this clearing takes place in the second round, with color found only in the gaps, we can wait a few months before rechecking. People who work with or ingest chemicals may need more cupping. I keep my patients free of toxin build up by cupping them quarterly or annually as needed.

Cupping is an extraordinary technique, and its effects are immediate. The healing process may be shortened by weeks, even months, by using cupping, a method that manually removes the energy blockage in ways that needles cannot.

Copyright Susan Johnson,L.Ac. 2006