Acupuncture and Cancer Care

What is Acupuncture?
Acupuncture is a practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine. It has been used for thousands of years. Here at MD Anderson, we also use current research to guide decisions about how to use acupuncture in a safe and effective manner during and after cancer care. This is called oncology acupuncture.

What are the Potential Benefits of Acupuncture?
Acupuncture does not treat cancer, rather, it can be safely used as a complementary therapy alongside conventional care to help provide relief from cancer and cancer treatment related symptoms. Acupuncture can help with:

- Cancer and cancer treatment related pain management
- Chemotherapy induced and post-operative nausea & vomiting
- Fatigue
- Constipation/Post-operative ileus
- Hot flashes/ Night sweats
- Xerostomia (Dry mouth)
- Chemotherapy Induced Peripheral Neuropathy
- Other symptoms

What kind of training is needed to become an acupuncturist?
Most acupuncturists are required to have a 4-year master’s degree in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. In order to be licensed, they must pass board exams with the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. In order to stay licensed, they must complete continuing education every year.

What to expect during an acupuncture treatment?
During an acupuncture treatment, very thin stainless-steel needles are inserted into specific acupuncture points on the body and left in place for 20-30 minutes. The needle’s effects may be modified as needed with manual or electrical stimulation and/or heat. The length and frequency of acupuncture treatments may vary according to the condition being treated, with chronic conditions requiring a longer treatment plan. Typically, two treatments weekly for 3-4 weeks are initially recommended, but treatment plans can vary according to the issue being addressed. Treatments may then decrease in frequency as the treatment plan progresses and desired results are achieved. The initial acupuncture consultation and treatment takes approximately one hour. Follow up sessions take approximately 30-45 minutes. Consider wearing loose comfortable clothing and avoid having a large meal just before an appointment, a light healthy snack is best.

Is it safe and do you reuse needles?
Acupuncture is a safe, minimally invasive medical procedure when performed by a licensed, experienced acupuncturist. Sterile, stainless steel, single-use needles are used in each treatment. All needles come packaged and sterilized and are used only one time. Acupuncture needles are an FDA-regulated medical device. After treatment, needles are disposed of in a sharps container and not used again. There are very few side effects.

How many sessions do I need?
This depends on the condition(s) being treated and how you respond to the treatment. Your response to treatment should be checked after 6 to 8 sessions. Sessions are often scheduled 1 to 2 times a week.

Summary
Acupuncture is an effective adjunctive therapy to help manage symptoms related to cancer and treatment. Acupuncture can be safely and effectively used as a part of an integrative approach to cancer care. For additional information regarding the efficacy and application of acupuncture visit the following websites:
National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine www.nccaom.org
National Cancer Institute www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/cam/hp/acupuncturepdq
National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health www.nccih.nih.gov/health/acupuncture
Chili Roasted Sweet Potatoes
By Karla Crawford

As fall approaches there is a special crop that appears in the harvest for this month. Sweet potatoes! Some may think pie or a side dish with cinnamon, butter and brown sugar. Sweet potatoes are a good source of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. In addition, they have both soluble and insoluble fiber which are good for heart health and gut health respectively. However, there is healthier way to enjoy this starchy vegetable.

Cooking time: about 20-25 minutes
Serves: 4-6

Ingredients:
- 2 sweet potatoes, cut into 1” cubes
- 1-2 Tbsp coconut oil, melted
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- 1-2 pinches cayenne (optional but very good!)
- 1 tsp sea salt

Instructions:
1. Set oven to 425 degrees F
2. Place cubed sweet potatoes in mixing bowl
3. In a separate small bowl, mix melted coconut oil with chili powder and cayenne
4. Pour liquid mixture over sweet potatoes and mix well until well coated
5. Layout onto cookie sheet and sprinkle with sea salt
6. Roast in oven for 20-25 minutes until crisp and cooked throughout