



The NADA Protocol

The NADA (National Acupuncture Detoxification Association) protocol is a standardized, auricular (ear) acupuncture treatment developed in the 1970's by Michael Smith in the South Bronx, New York. Originally designed to support individuals with substance use disorders, it has since expanded in application to address a wide range of health issues, including trauma, anxiety, depression, stress and pain management.

The NADA protocol involves the gentle insertion of very fine, sterile, single-use needles at five specific points in each ear. These points correspond to key organ systems in Chinese medicine—specifically the lungs, liver, kidneys, sympathetic nervous system, and shen men (or "spirit gate" for emotional balance). The treatment typically lasts 30 - 45 minutes, during which participants sit quietly in a group setting.

One of the strengths of the NADA protocol is its adaptability to group formats. In a communal environment, multiple participants can receive treatment simultaneously. Group acupuncture sessions using NADA are typically quiet, non-verbal, and do not require participants to disclose personal histories, making it highly accessible for diverse populations.

Safety

The NADA protocol is widely regarded as safe. All needles for acupuncture treatments are pre-packaged, sterile and disposable needles used in accordance with national Clean Needle Technique standards. Side effects are minimal and may include minor bruising or tingling near the insertion point, or occasional dizziness. Ear seeds that do not puncture the skin can be used as an alternative to needles.

Evidence-Based Benefits

Numerous studies and clinical observations have documented positive outcomes associated with the NADA protocol, including:

- Decreased symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression
- Better sleep quality
- Improved mental clarity and alertness
- Reduced aches and pains
- Reduction in cravings for substances such as alcohol, nicotine, and drugs

Programs across the country and throughout the world – including hospitals and clinics, drug treatment centers, disaster response teams, veterans' groups, and prisons - have successfully integrated the NADA protocol with beneficial outcomes.



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