

Cupping FAQ

What is cupping?

Cupping is a technique that has been used by many cultures for thousands of years, although it is especially popular in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Historically, materials such as bone, shells, and wood were used to create the cups. Modern cups are made of glass, plastic, and silicone. The cups are placed on the skin, and with a vacuum effect, they pull tissues up and expand blood vessels. There are different types of cupping including wet, dry, fire, and dynamic. I use silicone cups in both stationary (leaving them in one place) and dynamic (moving the cups around) ways.

What does it feel like?

Cupping can feel like a vacuum sucking your skin up! Or imagine a friendly octopus giving you kisses with its tentacles.

What does it help with?

Cupping is great at releasing fascia. Cupping is beneficial for inflammation, muscle soreness, chronic pain & tightness, phlegm in the lungs, scar tissue, arthritis, fibromyalgia, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, headaches & migraines. In traditional Chinese Medicine cupping is said to increase Qi (life force energy) and help remove toxins from circulation and bring them to the surface of the skin where they can be more easily eliminated.

Will they leave marks on my skin?

Usually after the first couple treatments there are darker marks as the cups are helping to move more toxins and increase circulation. There are darker marks if the cups are left in one spot compared to moving them around more often. With regular treatments the marks should get lighter in color. Dark marks can take up to a week to go back to normal.

Will it pull on body hair?

They shouldn't pull on body if the right lubricant is used. For areas with more hair a thicker cream may be necessary, compared to a lighter oil.

Is it painful?

You will likely feel the strong suction of the cups, but it shouldn't be excruciating. It could be a bit painful on areas such as the forearms, outside of the legs (IT Band), and calves- these areas have lots of connective tissue and therefore can become more adhered to surrounding muscles.

How do I take care of myself post-cupping?

After a cupping treatment you may feel tender on the areas where there was more stagnation/where the cups were left on longer, but this should dissipate within 3 days. The day of the treatment keep the areas that were cupped covered by clothing so that no new pathogens can enter through the open pores. After your first treatment you may feel groggy and lethargic, so it is a good idea to do some light exercise like walking. Drinking is also a good idea after bodywork of any kind- keep those tissues hydrated!

Who should not get cupping?

Cancer patients, those with organ failure, those with a pacemaker. Cupping should not be done over any open wounds or fractures, varicose veins, or sites of deep vein thrombosis. People with acute infections, taking blood thinners, or with weak constitutions should approach cupping with caution.

It is important to let your therapist know about medications, surgeries, or any other relative medical information so they can make an informed decision whether cupping is right for you.

Are there any dangers associated with cupping?

If performed by a trained professional, the risks are minimal. But adverse reactions can include bruising, headaches, dizziness, tenderness at cupping site, and burns.