



Auricular Point Acupressure (Ear Seeds) Experience

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In the Summer of 2022, there was a notice sent out to WNA's support group recruiting people who have chemo-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN) for a medical study funded by the National Cancer Institute and jointly conducted by Johns Hopkins and UTHealth/MD Anderson Cancer Center. In addition to CIPN, participants must live within driving distance of the Houston Medical Center for in-person testing.

The study involved measuring the effectiveness of auricular point acupressure (APA) using three different teaching methods:

1. In-person: The professor or research assistant would teach and directly apply the ear seeds to the participant.
2. Virtual: The professor or research assistant would teach via virtual conference how to apply the ear seeds to the participant.
3. Self-guided: The participant would learn how to apply the ear seeds via a phone app.

Before I get too ahead of myself, you may be wondering what APA is.

- **Auricular:** Of or relating to the ear or to the sense of hearing.
- **Point:** A specific spot on the ear, which correlates to a specific area of the body.
- **Acupressure:** Similar to acupuncture, acupressure stimulates the area of the body; however, acupressure uses ear seeds applied with a small adhesive instead of needles.

The study included 240 participants and randomly selected the three teaching methods. I was the 81st participant and assigned to the in-person teaching approach. Yeah! On the first visit, I was introduced to APA and directions for daily treatments.

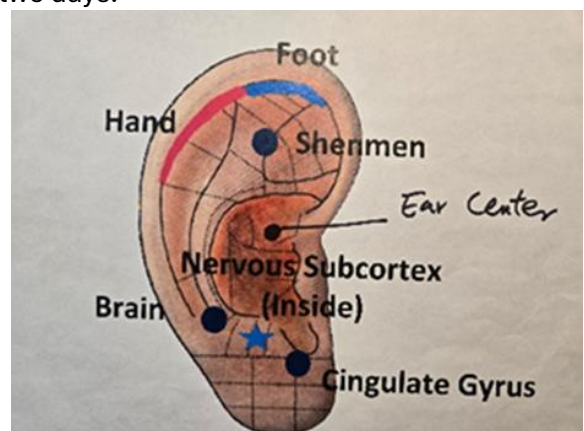
Think of the ear representing an upside-down fetus; the earlobe is the head, and the top of the ear includes the hands and feet. To stimulate the points, press each seed until feeling tenderness (not pain!) and keep pressed while moving up and down (not side to side). Press for two seconds, release for two seconds, re-press for two seconds, etc. Repeat for each point on both ears.

The seeds should be pressed at least three sessions per day. The seeds can be pressed on both ears at the same time or separately; I chose separately. In addition, there is no specific order to press the seeds. I found it easier to start with the ear lobe and move towards the top of the ear.

There are various protocols for how long to leave the seeds on the ears and how long to let the ears rest. In this study, the ear seeds were left on for five days and given a rest for two days.

While APA can be used for many conditions (e.g., anxiety, weight loss, insomnia), the points that are specifically for peripheral neuropathy are:

- Foot
- Hand
- Shenmen
- Ear Center
- Nervous Subcortex
- Brain
- Cingulate Gyrus



I noticed a positive difference immediately after the first time the ear seeds were applied. I could feel individual carpet fibers under feet. Prior to the ear seed application, it felt like I was walking on pillows; it was hard to detect the substrate under my feet. On the way home, I could feel my toes in my shoes. This lasted about 15 minutes into the drive.

For the following week, I noticed additional improvements in my sensory and motor skills. During minute eight of a treadmill walk, I could feel my toes bending at the joint. So, I increased my speed from 3.5 mph to 4 mph. No numbness or tingling, which would have been felt in the past. I increased the speed more, to 5 mph. Still no numbness. Feeling a little confident, I ran for one minute, walked for one and a half minutes, for a total of 30 minutes. I was able to replicate this the next day. However, this was short-lived due to a fall and fracturing my foot.

During the second week of APA, positive progression continued. The bottom of my left big toe was itchy for the first time in a very long time. Another improvement was in my typing skills. They had been declining; both in sensory and motor skills. The improvements were noticed on phone and laptop. My fingers were hitting the intended letter. And at a faster rate.

By the third week I could point my toes on my left foot, my grip was more defined, and I could use a manual can opener again.

In the first month of the study, the professor applied the ear seeds once a week. After that fourth week, it was up to me to apply the ear seeds weekly for the following three months (the duration of the study). With such positive results, two years later I continue to use APA therapy.

I entered this study a skeptic. Like most of us, I have tried many treatments with no improvements. One of the treatments I tried was acupuncture. I saw an acupuncturist once a week for eight weeks. It made some of my symptoms worse and others unchanged. So, I went into this with very low expectations. But the APA has ended up being a great additional tool for managing my peripheral neuropathy symptoms.

Interested in trying this therapy?

Kris bought her ear seed kit from Amazon after her involvement in the study:

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01HXPU76G/>

Another kit with good reviews:

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0B4Z157W1>

The kits include seeds, tweezers, ear probes and an e-book. The e-book has instructions and placement of seeds for a lot of medical issues - except PN. For PN, use the chart of the ear in Kris's article which was given to her during the peripheral neuropathy ear seed study.