

Cupping

Cupping (Horn Method) is a method of treating disease by causing local congestion (Blood Stasis) through negative pressure. A partial vacuum is created in jars usually by means of heat. The heated jars are immediately applied to the skin. The vacuum in the jars “sucks up” the underlying tissue into the glass making it difficult for blood to circulate normally and thus creates a temporary Blood Stasis.

Functions

- Warms and promotes the free flow of Qi and Blood in the meridians
- Dispels Cold Dampness
- Diminishes swelling and pain

Indications

- Bi Syndrome due to Wind Dampness (pain in the lower back, shoulders and leg)
- Gastrointestinal disorders such as stomach ache, vomiting and diarrhea
- Lung diseases such as cough and asthma
- Headache, hypertension, common cold, cough, low back pain, painful menstruation; red, swollen and painful eyes; poisonous snake bites, non-ulcerated furuncles

Cupping with Bloodletting: acute sprains accompanied by Blood Stasis

CNT: acute and chronic pain, mild to severe conditions such as colds, flus, respiratory problems like asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, functional organ problems, musculoskeletal problems, and in any cases of reoccurring or persistent fixed pain

Types of Cups

- Animal horn:** such as ox or sheep horn
- Bamboo jar:** 3-7 cm in diameter, 8-10cm in length forming a drum shaped cylinder. Open end has a smooth rim
- Glass cups:** big abdomen, thicker smooth mouth with a projecting rim
- Pottery or porcelain:** small on the ends and bulging in the middle, drum-shaped
- Metal:** copper or iron and shaped like bamboo goblets
- Rubber:** same shape as glass
- Oxidative polymers with auxiliary materials:** burned in the kiln

Methods

AIR-EXHAUST METHOD:

By suction: a cup with a sucking device both parts in one or separate

By suction and syringe: cups made of small penicillin or streptomycin bottles

By suction with air pump: cup with a piston fixed to the mouth and an external suction pump

Rubber ball for suction: rubber ball and cup are connected to each other and not separable, or rubber ball and cup are separable, or rubber ball is separable after the cup is attached to the skin and connectable with other cups

ELECTRO-PUMP METHOD:

By suction with squeezing: glass tube and a rubber balloon. The thinner end of the glass tube, shaped like a megaphone, is connected to a rubber balloon. Installed type: rubber bladder with an on-off switch, rubber tube and a glass or transparent-plastic cup

By suction with double-holed cup: oval-shaped glass cup with two cylindrical holes, one for infusion and the other for suction

Electro-cup: combines negative pressure, warmth, magnetic therapy and electroacupuncture in one. Negative pressure and temperature are controlled by an electric current which can be connected to the pressure-measuring machine for observing the negative pressure inside the cup



Magnetic cup: combines magnetic therapy and cupping. Made from high-quality plastic in a round shape with opening on one side and suction device on the other. Two parts connect with each other when used

Medical multi-functional cup: medicinal fluid or powder or tablets can be put inside of the cup for medicinal cupping

Distance infrared vacuum cup: heater made of a rare-earth element installed inside the cup, vacuum cupping is combined with heating

HZ-III distance infrared vacuum apparatus: coordinates vacuum and distance infrared cupping. Used for many diseases

Fire Cupping:

Spark method (Fire Twinkling): clamp a cotton ball 95% soaked alcohol with forceps or nippers, ignite it and swirl it in a cup, the mouth of the which is facing down. Swiftly take it out and place the cup on the selected spot

Fire Throwing: throw a piece of ignited paper or an alcohol soaked cotton ball into the cup, then rapidly place the mouth of the cup firmly against the skin on the desired location. This method is applied to the lateral side of the body; otherwise the burning paper or cotton ball may fall and hurt the skin

Cotton Slice method: make a thin cotton slice 1-2 cm in diameter, soak it in 95% alcohol and stick it to the inner wall of the cup. Ignite the cotton side and quickly place the mouth of the cup tightly against the skin on the desired location

Water Cupping:

Boiling method: boil the bamboo cup in water or liquid medicine for 203 minutes, take it out with its mouth facing down using forceps, cover the mouth quickly with a dry towel folded in several layers to absorb the fluid in the cup and reduce the temperature at the cup's mouth but keep the heat inside the cup, then place the mouth of the cup on the skin and press the cup for about 30 seconds to make it adhere firmly

Steaming method: fill the kettle with water or medicinal liquid and heat it to boiling. When the vapor gushes from the kettle's spout or a tube fixed to the kettle's spout, insert the spout or tube into the cup for 2-3 minutes, then place the cup immediately against the skin at the desired location

Suction cupping: place the cup on the treatment area first, then use its air pump to extract the air to make the cup stick tightly to the skin

For squeezing cupping, electromagnetic cupping, distance infrared cupping, medicinal multi-functional cupping and so on, refer to the relevant instruction brochures.

Application Methods:

ONLY CUPPING:

- **Sparkling/ Rapid succession cups:** using the sparking method, a cup is alternately placed, lifted and replaced in rapid succession, producing many small suctions until the underlying skin is reddened (**uses:** local areas of numbness or declining functions associated with deficient conditions). Method should be quick and accurate. If necessary, follow with retaining cups
- **Retaining cups:** leave the cup on the skin until the skin in the local area becomes reddish or even until the subcutaneous stasis becomes dark purple in color, then take the cup off
- **Moving cups:** first apply lubricant, such as vaseline, medical glycerin, liquid paraffin, skin moistening cream or warm water or medicinal liquid to the area to be cupped. Apply a bit of lubricant to the mouth of the cup. When using lubricants decant a bit of lubricant into secondary disposable container or onto a surface or paper towel for single use only. Do not dip back into the container or retouch the spout of the pump container. After the cup adheres to the skin, pull and push the cup to move it repeatedly with an even strength till the skin becomes purplish-red (using suction, as described above) and move it back and forth until the skin is reddened
- **Cups in line(s):** use many cups for cupping along a meridian(s) or muscle group(s) for treatment involving a large area

NEEDLING AND CUPPING:

- **Cupping with a filiform needle retained:** cup with a needle retained in the center of the cup. **Be sure the cup is big enough and the handle of the needle is short enough to prevent the cup from touching the needle handle.** Remove the cup and the needle after some time. If needling over the thoracic region, be sure that the needle is inserted obliquely (**uses:** rheumatism)
- **Cupping after needling:** cup at the punctured area immediately after needling. Disinfect the skin again with a sterilized cotton ball after cupping
- **Cupping combined with bloodletting:** cup after pricking the point with a cutaneous needle. Disinfect the skin again and clean the blood with sterilized cotton ball after cupping. After treatment the pricked area should be protected by sterilized dressing (**uses:** injury of the soft tissue, neurodermatitis, pruritis, neurasthenia and gastrointestinal nervous dysfunction)



- **Herbal preparations and cupping:** fill cup up with 1/3 to 1/2 full with medicinal fluid (made from ginger juice, hot pepper water, etc.), then create a suction first with heat from a burning cotton ball as described above (**uses:** arthritic pain, coughing, asthma, common cold, ulcers, chronic gastritis, indigestion, psoriasis)

Length of Time:

Retention of cups depends on age, pathological condition, physical constitution of the patient

Normal: 5-20 minutes

Sensitive skin, thin or weak patients, elderly, children: shorter duration

Course of Treatment:

Acute illness: once every other day for the same location

Chronic illness: 7-10 cups = 1 course with 3-5 days of rest between courses or wait until the cupping marks have disappeared

Point Selection:

Ren12: stomach diseases

LI15: supraspinatus tendinitis

During cupping: if the patient experience unbearable pain in the local area, reduce the pressure by releasing air or remove the cup immediately.

During cupping, if the patient has symptoms of dizziness, fullness in the chest, nausea, weakness of the limbs, profuse cold sweating or even loss of consciousness, remove the cups immediately and put the patient in the head down feet up position. Give them water, sweet drinks or press GV26. Carefully observe changes to the blood pressure and heart rate. For serious cases, use the syncope treatment: Deficiency type: Du26, Du20, PC6, Ren6, ST36; Excess type: Du26, LI4, PC9, PC8, LV3, LV1

Removing the Cup:

Simple cup: hold the cup in the middle and bottom with one hand and slightly tilt it while pressing with the thumb or index finger of the other hand against the skin at the edge of the mouth of the cup to let the air out

Suction cup: lift the plug cap on top to let air into the cup, then lift the cup from the skin or use the same method as for simple cup

Water or medicinal liquid cup: place the patient in a position that ensures the cup is on the lateral side, then remove the cup carefully

Normal Reaction: purple patches with a slightly hot and painful feeling or local redness that disappears after a short period of time as these are normal reactions to cupping

After Cupping Care and Contraindications:

Gently wipe the water droplets away from the local area with a sterilized cotton ball after cupping

Don't scratch if there is a slight pain and itching in the cupping area. This will disappear in a few days

Blisters (bullae): fluid will be absorbed naturally without breaking the blister. Body fluids are bullae. If filled with blood these are called hemorrhagic bullae and are generally seen in patients taking anticoagulant medications and blood-thinning supplements

Large blisters: break it at the base to let the fluid come out, cover with sterilized gauze Bleeding: clean the blood with a sterilized cotton ball

Damaged skin: treat with routine disinfection and protect with sterilized dressing

After care for sores or skin ulcers: if cups are used on sores or skin ulcers, clean away the pus and blood and treat the wound with conventional treatments

PRECAUTIONS:

Fully expose the area to be cupped. Shave the skin if too hairy. Take care to prevent infection in the local area

Patient should be comfortable. The area to be cupped should be relaxed

Do not change positions during cupping to prevent cups from falling off



Elderly, children and weak constitution: First treatment is with fewer cups and shorter retention time. Use great care when performing cups on pregnant women and infants

Do not use electro- or magnetic cups for patients with cardiac pacemakers

Take a detailed medical history before starting treatment with every patient. Screen for cardiac pacemakers, use of blood-thinning supplements and medications, bleeding disorder such as hemophilia and Von Willebrand disease, potential reactive skin lesions such as keloid scarring (previous keloids) and Koebner phenomenon (history of psoriasis)

Don't try to pull hard or rotate the cup when removing it. This can damage the skin and cause pain

Cupping should be light, fast, stable and accurate. Alcohol used on the cotton ball should be applied sparingly to prevent burning the patient's skin. For burns, give routine treatment (CNT: cold water, never ice)

Bleeding cups/Wet cups: clean the skin with alcohol or soap and water before beginning the treatment. Always wear protective clothing, eye wear and gloves when performing bleeding cups. After removing the cups, place in biohazard/sharps container along with all bloody material. Follow CNT rules for cleaning up blood spills

Cleaning cups: if no contact with body fluids, use soap and water and an intermediate level disinfectant, let dry and then store in a closed container

If cups do come in contact with body fluids or open wounds, clean with soap and water and then disinfect with high-level disinfectant or autoclave machine. It is recommended to use disposable cups if performing bloodletting with cups. In which case dispose in a biohazard container

CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Acute contagious and serious heart diseases and heart failure

Highly allergic skin, infection skin diseases, skin tumors or skin ulcers

Thrombocytopenic purpura, leukemia, hemophilia and other hemorrhagic diseases

Artery pulsation and varicose vein areas

Schizophrenia, convulsions, nervousness and uncooperative patients

Acute traumatic fracture, moderate to severe edema

Scrofula, hernia, active pulmonary tuberculosis

Sense organs: eyes, ears, mouth and nose

Do not apply 48 hours before or 24 hours after chemotherapy

When treating children be sure that a parent or guardian is present

Because of the risk of misinterpreting cupping bruises, please provide a handout explaining cupping, the side effects before treatment