

## What is Moxa...?



Fresh Moxa Leaves

Moxa is a plant (*Artemisia argyi folium*) otherwise known as mugwort. It is used as a heat and infrared source to stimulate areas and acupoints along the meridians.

There are many different grades and forms of moxa, from the highest quality gold 'punk' used in rice grain application to the lesser quality grade punk for cone moxa, to the rolled, dried or carbonised pencil style moxa.

Moxa is also a great home therapy (see the other side of this card) generally for indirect application, with a pencil style moxa stick - either smoky or smokeless (carbonized).

Moxibustion in Japan is a specialized skill and while often combined with acupuncture, practitioners of this treatment strategy are certified separately. Some practitioners work very successfully with moxa only, and the range of conditions and ways of treating with moxa are as thorough and diverse as those treated with acupuncture.

In Australia, moxa is often used in combination with acupuncture but it is generally only practitioners trained in a Japanese style who use direct moxa techniques such as rice grain moxa, (okyu) and cone moxa (chinetsukyu)

When using rice grain moxa, it is extinguished just before it reaches the skin; with cone moxa only about a third of the cone is allowed to burn down so the skin is not affected.

This can mean that as a patient you may not even feel the warmth of the moxa but the infrared qualities of the moxa still penetrate the soft tissue.

Sometimes the use of ginger or garlic slices to insulate the skin from the burning cones, or the use of moxa with salt in the umbilicus to warm the hara (belly) are modifications to the standard cone (chinetsukyu) treatments.



Chinetsukyu moxa is rolled into small cones and used as a warming and tonifying technique.



'Rice grain' moxa uses the highest grade of moxa and is used to stimulate blood flow.



An example of Kyutoshin, using a smoky form of rolled dried moxa.

Needle head moxa (kyutoshin), a combined technique, is done using either the moxa punk, small dried rolls or premade caps which are placed atop the needles, allowing the heat from the moxa to be carried into the body through the shaft of the needle.

Generally, any one of these treatment strategies will be incorporated into your acupuncture treatment. Occasionally direct moxa application is the only strategy used.

Moxibustion is especially good for sensitive or rehabilitating patients, those who are needle phobic or for those who find the cold especially difficult to tolerate.



ONDAN Smokeless moxa caps, for Kyutoshin, are a high quality Japanese moxa, producing a strong warmth.



# Moxa for Home Therapy

## Guidelines for use

For home therapy the use of an indirect, smokeless, cigar or pencil style moxa is generally provided.

The moxa you have been given as part of your take home treatment is in the form of a moxa stick and has been compressed into a cigar-like roll.

You may have been given a carbonized form of moxa so that it won't produce large quantities of smoke, this makes it safe and comfortable to use in the house.

Before using the moxa stick you will need to prepare the following:

A lighter or a candle

A small ceramic eggcup filled with water.

An eggcup is ideal as it provides an edge to scrape the ash that forms on the moxa stick during use, as well as holding enough water to extinguish the moxa stick when you are finished using it.

When ash does collect at the burning end of the moxa stick gently scrape the stick along the ceramic edge, this will ensure that the stick stays hot.

Avoid tapping the stick on the edge of your eggcup, as this may create small fractures in the moxa stick and it is more susceptible to break and splinter during use.

## How to use your moxa stick

Simply light one end using the candle. With smokeless moxa it may take several minutes to light but when the stick is lit correctly, you will be able to hold the lit end close to the skin (2-3cm distance) and feel pleasant, radiating warmth.

Hold the lit end of the stick over the area to be treated, maintaining a distance of at least 2-3cm so that there is never any direct contact with the skin.

The treatment requires that you feel the warmth of the stick close to your skin. If you don't feel any warmth radiating from the stick, you may need to relight it. Your practitioner will tell you how long and how often the moxa should be applied.

The moxa stick is generally moved slowly over a general area or used at specific points with a pecking motion.

If you are unsure always ask.

Never touch the lit end of the moxa stick even if it does not appear to be glowing.

When the treatment is finished, douse the stick in the water in the eggcup to put it out completely. Once it is out, allow it to dry before the next application of moxa.

Please do not allow children or pets to play with, or come in contact with the lit end of the moxa stick.

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