

Moxa at home

Moxa is a plant (*Artemisia argyi Folium*) that is used as a heat source to stimulate acupuncture points. Although acupuncture is better known in the West, moxibustion has also been used in traditional treatments for over 2000 years in China and is in fact the second part of the name for acupuncture in the Chinese language (zhen jiu, literally “needle moxa”).

The moxa you have been given as part of your treatment is in the form of a moxa stick and has been compressed into a cigar-like roll that makes it ideal for use at home. Before using moxa you will need to prepare the following:

What you will need

- A cigarette lighter or matches
- A candle
- A small ceramic or glass dish to place any ash in that may form on the moxa stick during treatment
- A small towel to place under the area being treated in case any ash is dropped.
- A glass screw-top jar, at least the height of the moxa stick, to extinguish the moxa when the treatment is finished.

How to use the moxa stick

Lighting the moxa stick

Simply **light one end** with a cigarette lighter, or light a candle and use the flame.

There are **two kinds of moxa stick** – **traditional moxa** is compressed leaves, like a cigar. It lights quite easily and gives off a lot of smoke. **Smokeless moxa** is like compressed charcoal. It **takes longer to light** but gives off very little smoke.

Especially when using smokeless moxa, you may need to swivel it in the flame for a minute or two, occasionally blowing softly on the end to help it ignite, and testing by holding it a few centimetres from the back of your hand to feel the heat radiation. It is ready to use when a pleasant radiating heat can be felt.

Moxa treatment

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

The moxa stick is then **moved slowly over the area** being treated; this will begin to feel pleasantly warm.

- When using to turn a **breech or posterior** positioned baby, the therapeutic time for moxa use is **20 minutes each side, twice a day**. During this time the moxa is briefly lifted away from the point Zhiyin BL67 each time it becomes hot, before resuming treatment (the pecking technique). If a partner is applying the treatment, you can say “hot” each time it reaches this feeling – your partner lifts the stick and then brings it near the point again.
- When used to treat other acupuncture points, the moxa stick can be applied for **five to seven minutes over each point** or until the area begins to feel uncomfortably hot.

Any **ash** can be **tapped off** or **gently brushed off** by using the edge of the small dish, so that the moxa stick remains hot.

If you suspect there is no longer any heat coming off the moxa stick, check by holding it two to three centimetres away from the back of your hand. **Relight if there is no radiating warmth.**

Caution

Never touch the lighted end of a moxa stick even if it no longer appears to be glowing.

Extinguishing the moxa stick

When treatment has finished, **place the moxa stick in a glass jar with the lid** screwed on firmly (smokeless moxa) or place the lit end into a candle holder (traditional moxa) so that the moxa stick is **deprived of oxygen** and cannot continue to burn.

The moxa stick can then be relit for repeated treatments, according to the instructions you received from your acupuncturist.