

Acupuncturist

Treat pain and illness with needles at specific points on the body. A master's degree, a state license, and usually your own practice.

TYPICAL PAY

\$76,040

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$39k to \$161k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

5 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Private practice, integrative clinics, hospitals, chiropractic and physic...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
Biology, chemistry and anatomy if offered. Any job that involves touching and talking to people all day is useful preparation.
- 2 College credits first** 2 to 4 years
Most acupuncture programs require at least two years of college, and many students finish a full bachelor's degree before applying.
- 3 Master's degree in acupuncture** 3 to 4 years
Three to four years at a school accredited by ACAHM (the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine). Classroom science, point location, and hundreds of hours treating real patients in a student clinic.
- 4 Board examinations** Months
The national certification board runs written exams in acupuncture foundations, point location, safety and biomedicine. California runs its own separate exam instead.
- 5 State license** Weeks to months
Apply to your state's licensing board with your transcript, exam results and a clean background check.

Pros and cons

- + You set your own hours and your own prices
- + Patients come back and you see them improve
- + Rapid projected growth in the field
- Graduate school debt with no paid training years
- You are running a small business whether you want to or not
- Income is slow to build in the first two or three years

Good to know

It is a graduate degree, not a short course

The federal occupation profile lists a master's or doctoral degree as the usual requirement, with a three to five year graduate program followed by a state board exam. Weekend certificate courses do not...

California goes its own way

The California Acupuncture Board runs its own licensing examination and publishes its own list of approved schools, separate from the national certification route most other states use. It is also the bigge...

Optional boosts

Chinese herbal medicine. Sports and orthopedic acupuncture. Fertility and pregnancy support. Cosmetic acupuncture.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Acupuncturists (29-1291.00)
Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine
California Acupuncture Board
Pacific College of Health and Science

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/acupuncturist>



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