

# New York Magazine

Ancient Treatments from the Far East

## ***Healing, Lifestyles & Spas***

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Historically, TCM and Ayurveda (Sanskrit for “the science of life”) were developed from a quest for wellness, from the desire to treat and prevent disease. Indeed, early texts date back thousands of years, well before the advent of allopathic medicine. Thanks to the efficacy of these early forms of medicine and the diligence of dedicated practitioners throughout the ages, these once crude concepts have been elevated into a kind of art. Acupuncture, Ayurveda, and other branches of Eastern medicine have been exported from China and India to the far corners of the earth. And though largely approached these ancient sciences with caution and even skepticism, their popularity and proven techniques have made concepts like doshas, meridians, and qi household words.

In the last decade or so, these ancient therapies have branched out from clinics and into day and destination spas all over the planet. As the spa industry has blossomed, so too has a desire to offer discriminating clients services that are relaxing and therapeutic. **“In the future, the modern spa will provide services and resources to their client community that will allow them to achieve the highest level of sustainable personal transformation in all aspects of their daily lives – physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional,” says Robert MacDonald, director of healing at Exhale Spa.** Both TCM and Ayurveda have been veritable gold mines for results-based spa treatments. When it comes to these age-old rituals, it seems that beauty is not just skin deep.

One of the many principles that TCM (the foundation of acupuncture, cupping, moxibustion, meridian theory, and much more) and Ayurveda share is that balance is a critical component of health. In Chinese medicine, this means that qi (energy) is flowing freely and evenly throughout the body’s meridians, while in Ayurveda, good health means that one’s doshas are in balance. These doctrines speak not only to matters of physical health and wellness as we commonly view them in the West, but to emotional, spiritual, psychological, and karmic balance as well. Illness and disease are the products of imbalance, and in order for health to return, equilibrium must be restored.

What the ever-evolving spa industry has discovered is that these highly therapeutic treatments can be adapted to the treatment room with compelling results. Techniques like cupping are providing clients with an alternative to deep tissue massage, while offering therapists an effective, hand-sparing tool for addressing tension, stagnation, and tissue adhesions. **Acupuncture is teaming up with esthetics for surgery-free**

**facelifts and with massage to mutually increase and lengthen the effects of both treatments.** Meanwhile, ayurvedic wisdom is finding its way onto spa.

Though Ayurveda has long been a source and inspiration for treatments, more and more spas are going beyond Shiodhara to offer dosha-specific therapies for their clients. Another sign of the increasing integrity of Ayurvedic spa services is a commitment to high-quality, often organic, oils. In Ayurveda, the quality of the oils is essential to the success and therapeutic benefit of the treatment. Oil is used as a tool for detoxifying the tissues as well as conditioning the skin.

TCM-based treatments like cupping, moxibustion, and acupressure/acupuncture facials and massage are demystifying the art and science behind this ancient healing practice and bringing its principles to a wider audience than ever before. **Exhale Spa, with destinations all over the U.S., offers a full menu of acupuncture-based treatments including massage, facials, energy work, and vibrational therapy. MacDonald notes, “The most frequently heard comment from those new to acupuncture is that they wanted to explore [alternative] treatment, but they didn’t know who to trust or where to go. Exhale provides a safe environment for our guests to explore this medicine, and the assurance of well-trained, highly skilled practitioners.”**

Clearly, both acupuncture and Ayurveda have much to teach us about health, wellness, and balance. Thankfully, spas are becoming much more savvy and results-oriented with their treatments, providing both the uninitiated and the experienced client with a trustworthy, safe, and luxurious avenue for sampling the breadth of these ancient arts. Their holistic approach and emphasis on balance further provides an alternative perspective to our Western tendency to max out every minute of our day and their myriad benefits are evident in skin-tone, stress level, and spirit.