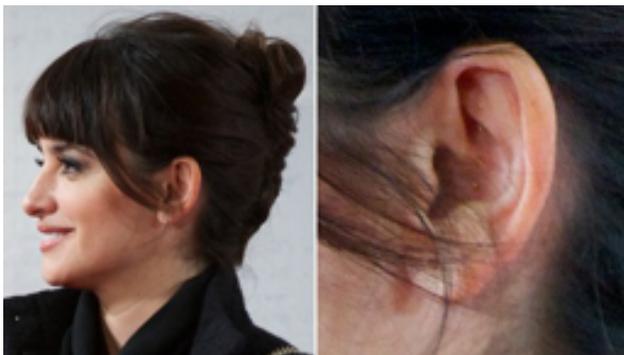


Penelope Cruz Sports Acupuncture Beads



The swath of tiny studs in Penelope Cruz’s ear isn’t the latest piercing fashion – it’s **auriculotherapy**, a form of acupuncture used to fight stress, pain and infertility.

“Auriculotherapy can be used for fertility, but those are not fertility points on her ear,” said **Jill Blakeway**, director of the Manhattan-based **YinOva Center** for complementary medicine. “Hers is a very standard protocol for people with stressful, busy lives.”

Auriculotherapy uses relexology points on the ear to tap into distant parts of the body, according to Blakeway.

“It’s almost like there’s a little homunculus; a little representation of the body that comes during embryonic development,” she said, describing how points in Cruz’s ear help calm the heart, mind and spleen, and bring the body into balance. “Auriculotherapy is remarkably effective,” she said.

During a treatment session, auriculotherapy needles are inserted about a quarter inch into the outer ear. When the session is over, Blakeway said the needles are removed and replaced with tiny gold or silver beads affixed with a sticky bandage that “potentiates the treatment.”

“It’s quite popular for relaxation,” Blakeway said of auriculotherapy. “We also do a lot for hunger, for people on diets.”

Acupuncture is gaining popularity in the U.S. as patients — and doctors — embrace a more holistic approach to medicine.

“Western medicine is very good for some things and not very good for others,” said Dr. Tony Chon, a medical acupuncturist with the Mayo Clinic’s Complementary and Integrative Medicine Program.

“Treatments like acupuncture and stress management therapy look at patients as more of a whole rather than their individual parts.”

But studies on acupuncture have yielded a “hodgepodge of results,” Chon said, because the gold standard placebo-controlled trial doesn’t always work. “It’s hard to study because people have pain and stress for different reasons,” he said.

Blakeway said acupuncture is “particularly good for treating chronic long-term imbalances like arthritis, irritable bowel, asthma, allergies and hormonal imbalances that cause infertility.” Her husband, YinOva Center co-director **Noah Rubinstein**, performed acupuncture on Kristen Davis during an episode of “Sex and the City.” Davis’ character, Charlotte, was undergoing in vitro fertilization.