



## IGNITION HEALTH

Veteran-Owned • Veteran-Focused • Salt Lake City, UT

### ***Your Veteran's Playbook: How to Get Acupuncture Through the VA***

From one veteran to another — thank you for reaching out. I'm a service-connected veteran and a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, and I've navigated the exact same VA system you're navigating right now. This playbook lays out precisely how to get acupuncture covered through the VA so you can walk into our call already knowing the path. Read it before we talk. On the call, I'll answer anything that's still unclear.

The most important thing to know up front: getting acupuncture through the VA is more straightforward than most veterans think. You do the initial legwork — it has to come from you — but the steps are simple, and I'll help you understand each one.

### **First: Are You Enrolled in VA Healthcare?**

Everything depends on this one question. Find yourself below.

#### **IF YOU ARE ALREADY ENROLLED**

- 1. Contact your Primary Care Provider (PCP) at the VA. You can do this two ways: message them through the My HealtheVet app, or call and ask to speak with the nurse assigned to your PCP.**
- 2. Tell them plainly: "I have pain and I want to try acupuncture."** That's it. That sentence starts the process.
- 3. Your PCP puts in a referral for acupuncture through the VA Community Care Network (CCN).** Tell your provider you'd like to go to Ignition Health — but know that the real gatekeeper is the CCN scheduler, not the provider (see the next section).
- 4. The VA CCN scheduler is who actually routes your referral to a provider.** This is the person who must hear "Ignition Health."

#### **IF YOU ARE NOT YET ENROLLED**

- 1. Enroll in VA healthcare first. (I can point you to how on our call — it's the one gate you have to pass through.)**
- 2. Once enrolled, you'll be assigned a Primary Care Provider.**
- 3. At your first appointment — or as soon as you can speak with your new PCP — ask for acupuncture, exactly the same way: "I have pain and I want to try acupuncture."**

4. From there you follow the same path above: your PCP puts in the referral, and when the CCN scheduler contacts you, you tell them Ignition Health.

## The Gatekeeper: The VA CCN Scheduler

Here's what most veterans don't realize. Your provider puts in the referral — but it's the VA Community Care Network scheduler who actually decides which provider you're routed to. They are the gatekeeper. When the scheduler contacts you (by phone or through the VA), this is the name you give them:

### IGNITION HEALTH

*Tell your provider too — it helps — but make sure the scheduler hears it. If you're not sure your referral routed correctly, that's exactly the kind of thing we'll confirm together on the call.*

## What Most Veterans Don't Know

**You can get a referral for each of your complaints — not just one.**

Neck pain, shoulder, back, knee — and mental health — can each have their own referral. Most veterans think they get “some acupuncture” and stop there. You may be entitled to far more care than you realize, across every issue that's been weighing you down. We'll talk through what applies to you.

Every referral has a shelf life — it covers a set number of visits within a set window of time, and it renews in cycles. The exact numbers shift depending on the VA and your situation, so I'll walk you through your specifics on the call.

Here's the part that matters most: once your first referral routes to us, managing it becomes my job, not yours. When your visits are used up or the referral's window closes, I handle getting it reinitiated — and I keep that door open for as long as the VA sees a continued medical need for your care. You navigate the front door once. I keep it open after that.

## While You Wait: Three Tools You Can Start Today

Referrals take time to route. These are the same tools I give patients in the clinic — free, simple, and things you can start tonight. They aren't a substitute for treatment; they're how you take back the first piece of ground on your own.

### Tool 1 — Intermittent Fasting: The Simplest Reset There Is

In the military you ran on discipline and structure. Intermittent fasting is exactly that — structure — applied to when you eat, not what you eat. Give your body a longer break between the last meal of one day and the first meal of the next, and it uses that quiet time to lower inflammation, burn stored fuel, and reset the systems that chronic pain and stress wear down.

- **Start with 12 hours.** Nothing changes about your food yet — only the clock.
- **Example:** Finish dinner at 1900, eat breakfast at 0700. Most veterans find the first week is the only hard one.
- **Level up slowly.** After a week or two, push toward 16:8 — a 16-hour break with an 8-hour eating window (say 1100 to 1900). This is the sweet spot for most people.
- **You're not starving.** Water, black coffee, and plain tea are all fine during the fast — and encouraged.
- **What to expect:** Weight moving in the right direction, steadier energy, less morning stiffness, better sleep. Give it three weeks before you judge it.

*One straight caution, veteran to veteran: if you take diabetes medication or insulin, take medications that require food, or have a history of disordered eating, talk to your PCP before changing your meal timing — and if you ever feel lightheaded, eat. This is a tool, not a test of toughness.*

### Tool 2 — Alternate Nostril Breathing: Downshift on Command

Your nervous system has spent years on high alert — that's what service trains into you. This breath is the fastest manual override I know: five minutes to move from fight-or-flight into rest-and-repair. I use it with patients before treatment, and it works just as well at 0200 when sleep won't come.

1. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. No judging how you're doing — there's no wrong way through this.
2. Take a few slow breaths in and out, and rest your left hand on your left knee.
3. On your right hand, fold your ring and little fingers toward the palm. Rest your index and middle fingers on the middle of your forehead, between the eyebrows.
4. Exhale slowly through your nose until your lungs are empty.
5. Close your RIGHT nostril with your thumb. Inhale gently and completely through the LEFT nostril.
6. Close the left nostril with your ring and little fingers. Hold for two counts.
7. Release your thumb and exhale slowly and completely through the RIGHT nostril. Stay empty for two counts.
8. Inhale gently and completely through the RIGHT nostril.
9. Close the right nostril with your thumb. Hold for two counts.

10. Release and exhale completely through the LEFT nostril. Stay empty for two counts. That's one full cycle.

Continue for 10 cycles. Remember: after you exhale from one nostril, inhale through that same nostril before switching. If the hand position is uncomfortable, adjust until it isn't — the breath is what matters, not the form. Use it before bed, before stressful appointments, or any time the engine is revving and you need it to idle.

### Tool 3 — Straight Answers: The Acupuncture FAQ

- **Is it safe?** Extremely safe in trained, licensed hands. Needles are sterile, individually wrapped, used once, and disposed of in medical waste containers.
- **Does it hurt?** This is the number-one question. The needles are about the thickness of a dog's whisker — most people feel a brief tingle, warmth, heaviness, or nothing at all. If anything is uncomfortable, say so and I adjust. Many veterans fall asleep on the table.
- **I tried it in the service and didn't like it.** If a corpsman ever gave you “battlefield acupuncture” in your ears and you hated it — this is not that. Clinic treatment is gentler, full-body, and tailored to you. Tell me about any past experience and we work around it.
- **Where do the needles go?** Mostly the arms below the elbows, legs below the knees, back, abdomen, and ears — it depends on what we're treating. Wear loose clothing or shorts to your visits.
- **Side effects?** Other than an occasional small bruise, essentially none. That's part of why the VA covers it.
- **What happens at a visit?** Your first visit is a full evaluation — history, pulse, tongue, tender points — plus your first treatment (plan on about 90 minutes). Follow-ups run about an hour. Long-standing problems take more visits than recent ones; we set your plan on visit one and reassess every session.
- **How do I prepare?** Eat a light meal beforehand so you're not running on empty (if it's a fasting day, schedule your visit inside your eating window). Skip alcohol and heavy exertion right before and after.
- **What does it cost me?** Through the VA Community Care Network, your covered visits cost you nothing out of pocket. That's the whole point of this playbook.

## Our Call: Ask Me Anything

Your 15-minute call is not a sales pitch and not a medical exam. It's an ask-me-anything — about acupuncture, about the VA, about the Community Care Network, about any part of this you want clarified. I've been through it. Bring your questions.

### Come ready to talk through:

- ✓ Whether you're enrolled, and if not, how to get there
- ✓ How to word your request to your PCP — and how to make sure the CCN scheduler routes you to us
- ✓ Which of your complaints might each qualify for their own referral
- ✓ How many visits and how long your referral covers, and how the renewal cycles work

### Before Our Call: Watch the FAQ Videos

Our website has short videos answering many of the most common questions veterans ask — worth a few minutes before we talk so we can spend our call on your situation specifically.

Watch them here: [ignitionhealthslc.com](http://ignitionhealthslc.com)

See you on the call! I look forward to being of service to you!

### Dr. Justus Verre

Doctor of Oriental Medicine • Service-Connected Veteran

Ignition Health • Salt Lake City, UT • (801) 835-8269

