

## The Effects and Benefits of the Ancient ART OF Cupping Therapy

Cupping is an ancient method of causing local congestion, where a vacuum is created with the use of vessels, which are placed on the skin either by means of heat or suction, which then draws up the underlying tissues. When the cups are left in place on the skin for a few minutes, blood stasis is formed and localized healing takes place.

Cupping is considered with others to be the oldest natural healing therapies. History tells us about Archaeologists who found evidence of cupping therapy being practiced from as early as 3000 B.C. Also in the evidence that was uncovered there were documents supporting the application of the cupping vessels and instruments used on the body as therapeutic procedure?

The earliest record of cupping is around 1,550 B.C. by the Egyptians. This document was called Ebers Papyrus; one of the oldest medical textbooks in the world, which was dated by the material it was written on, called papyrus, this papyrus like paper was prepared in ancient Egypt from the pithy stem of a water plant. The Papyrus like paper was also widely used throughout the ancient Mediterranean world in the writing of important documents. Anthropologists also found evidence in China of cupping dating as far back as 1,000 B.C. The history of Chinese cupping is a long history of healing and innovation. It was an ancient Taoist medical practice was widely used in the courts of Imperial China.

Its administration was first documented by Ge Hong, in an ancient article called Handbook of Prescriptions for Emergencies. Ge Hong was a practicing Taoist, an alchemist, and a medicinal herbalist. He was famous for his accomplished of being a healer and a trusted confidante of many high officials in ancient China.

Ge Hong along with other medicine men used animal horns for cupping. That is why in some medical articles of the empire, cupping was referred to as the horn technique of healing. This led researchers to believe that cupping was indeed a Chinese invention and its practice was older than stated in recorded history. This

ancient method has been proven effective against common disorders associated with the pulmonary system. The Chinese expanded the use of the cupping technique to surgery, this was called wet cupping. Other ancient cultures including the Egyptians and early Greeks are all embraced the therapeutic value of cupping. Hippocrates (400 B.C.) used cupping for internal disease and structural problems. Hippocrates was known as the Father of Modern Medicine, during this golden era of the early Greek state Hippocrates and his followers were devoted to an empiric approach to healing and sought naturalistic explanations of why people became ill.

The Cupping technique soon spread through the medicine world, throughout Asian and European civilizations. Each country is having their own name for cupping therapy and having their own methods of cupping. Here are some of the names that cupping is referred to in other cultures;

Hijamah / Hijama / Baguanfa / jiaofa / Bentusa /  
Vendouse, Gac Hoi / Bahnkes, Kyukaku / Ventosaterapia /  
SchrÖpftherapie / Kupa Cekme / Jiaofa / Bankovani /  
Ventouzzes and Vacuume Terapi.

History also tells us of the cupping devices used in conducting the cupping technique. In the ancient scrolls, anthropologists deciphered and described from the scriptures of how hollow animal horns were used and oral suction was applied to create a vacuum to drain toxins and draw out illnesses, whether they were bites, stings, infections or any other forms of disease in that era. With the pointed end of the horn pierced the horn was then placed on the surface of the skin. The vacuum was then created by orally sucking the air out of the horn through the hole. when the vacuum was achieved, the end of the horn was then sealed with a wad of dried grass which would be immediately placed into the opening by the nimble workings of the tongue, another way to cause suction was for the medicine men to burn dry leaves or paper which would place it inside the horn to produce suction and left until the heat dissipates.

History also tells us that not only was cupping used for healing but they also had beliefs about what could enter the body and mind, such as evil spirits which could cause pain and suffering. Many researchers including anthropologists described how healers of these super naturalistic traditions applied oral suction to

the surface of the body to withdraw the effects of these evil influences. Through all the different cultures and civilizations different forms of cupping vessels were used. Along shoreline of the west coast of North America, Vancouver Island, sea shells were used, In Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America, horns from various animals were made into cupping devices, among the Kelantanese Malays were buffalo horn.

As time moved on the horns then devolved into bamboo cups, bamboo cupping still is practiced today in some regions of china. The bamboo cups were immersed in boiling water to absorb the liquid heat, the heated bamboo cups were then positioned to specific points on the body, resulting with the hot and cold imbalances which created a vacuum inducing suction to the skin, the healers would leave the bamboo cups stationary for about 10 minutes, the cups would be reheated again and the procedure continues. Throughout history eventually cupping vessels changed and have been replaced by glass, plastic and rubber with exceptions of the bamboo cup still used today.

The two main methods of cupping practiced wildly throughout history and also documented in the Ebers Papyrus, and Hippocrates were, Bleeding or wet cupping and Dry cupping.

**Dry cupping** – This procedure involves creating a vacuum into the cup bringing blood and lymph to a pacific area, promoting circulation and healing, In addition it will help break adhesions between the skin and underlying connective tissues, allowing for freer movement, pulling the local underlying tissue up into the cupping vessel.

**Moist or wet cupping** – This is the oldest and the most effective method. A surgical tool called a lancet is used to scrape the skin, the glass is then placed over the manipulated area, and with the suction pulling the blood, which is then drawn up into the glass cup. As history moved on and we moved on in centuries, more cupping therapy methods devolved and have become more into worldwide use.

**Fire Cupping** – Another traditional Chinese method of cupping used worldwide. A small cotton ball is lightly coated with alcohol. The cotton ball is then ignited and inserted inside the cup which will evacuate the air, creating the

vacuum. The cotton ball is then withdrawn from the cup; the cup is then quickly placed onto the skin to the chosen area.

**Massage or moving cupping** – This is done by applying oil to the skin, by moving the cup or glass around with a weak suction over the area that needs to be worked on.

**Needle cupping** – This method is a combination of acupuncture and cupping. The acupuncture needle is applied first, and then the glass is applied over it.

**The hot cupping technique** – This is done with moxa, also known as dried mugwort. This herb is a warming herb. To do this treatment the needles are warmed with smoldering dried mugwort, and then applied to the appropriate area. The cups are then applied over the top.

**The flash technique** – This is a method where several medium cupping are done several times in quick succession. This stimulates the tissues in the area to speed up the healing process.

**Herbal cupping** – This is done by applying the appropriate herbal tincture to the inside of the glass, and then the glass is applied to the skin.

**The water technique** – This would be the least used method of cupping. It is a very difficult method to learn. One third of the glass is filled with warm water and held very close to where it's to be placed onto the body. Burning cotton wool is quickly inserted inside the glass, while the glass is swiftly turned over and placed in position. If done correctly, no water should be spilled.

**Stationary cupping** – The cups are placed onto the desired location and left on the same spot for ten to fifteen minutes. Several cups may be applied in a single treatment. To release the cups, press the skin around the cup this will breaks the seal ready for removal.

**Momentary cupping** – The cups are 'popped' on and off rapidly

**Magnetic / Hand – Pump** This have become the most modern way of cupping for many practitioners, the use of a hand pump to obtain suction. This can give several advantages to the practitioner, no need for a flame or flammable liquids. It is also easier to judge the amount of suction needed, the magnetic are

placed inside the cups the cups are then placed on allocated points, and suction is then applied.

At the beginning cupping method was mainly used for minor elements but as time has moved on, we have found that cupping has many more benefits and healing powers,

- Common cold and cough menstrual pain (endometriosis)
- Headaches including migraine Infertility
- Breathing difficulties (asthma) Urinary incontinence
- Diarrhea and constipation Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Tonsillitis and sore throat Hypotension (low blood pressure)
- Angina pectoris (heart pain) Stomach aches and heart burn
- Hand, leg, neck and back pain Neuralgia (nerve pain)
- Osteoarthritis and gout Diabetes

The benefits of cupping therapies are endless due to its stimulating and the strengthening effects. Although cupping is brilliant treatments in it there are some diseases that cupping therapy can not treat, Congenital (present at birth) and genetic diseases like down syndrome, cerebral palsy, cleft lip, hole-in-heart, congenital dislocation of the hip, Trauma and accidents, broken bones and joints, open wound, torn muscles, tissue and organ damage, internal bleeding, and excessive bleeding. However Cupping Therapy can promote quicker recovery and better healing of these conditions due to improvement of the blood circulation.

Although cupping therapy can treat everybody, there are some exceptions, Children below 10 years old, adults above 70 years old with heart problems, pregnant women, patients recovering from surgery, weak and thin people suffering from lack of blood. And people with threatening conditions, heart attack, asthmatic attack, trauma and accidents.

In the mid-1800, s there was a decline in cupping therapy, it was sharply criticized by the medical community making cupping therapy fall away as a popular method. There are a number of issues related to why this was happening, during this period [mid – 1800] there was a newly established scientific model of medicine, discrediting all other previously established Traditional therapies in order to gain medical dominance. It was said that treating the inside was preference to the

outside. More and more research was being put into the science of illnesses and diseases and more medics were becoming more available to help combat these diseases and were becoming widely used in hospitals and clinics achieving what were thought to be impossible.

However over the 19th, 20th and 21st century the tides have turned and people are rediscovering and some practices have welcomed the acknowledgment, as well as reinstating alternative therapies.

Although the use of Cupping has remained popular throughout many cultures who kept to their traditional ways, the 20th century witnessed a widespread decrease in many Anglo-Saxon societies. Even the North American Indians who used Buffalo Horn, seashells, gourds and bones for Cupping, but their culture have been decimated and the people herded into reservations, their traditions of health maintenance and healing were also lost.

The most common and misunderstanding regarding one of the most powerful and beneficial after effects of cupping is the marks that are left on the skin. Cupping can leave marks which indicate that the stagnation or disease has been moved from the deeper tissue layers to the surface, allowing fresh oxygenated blood to nourish and heal the underlying areas. Any suction device left long enough in one place will loosen and pull this agent out and up to the skin surface.

In many countries this is a non-issue, they've experienced themselves the amazing detoxifying effects that suction therapy can provide. But in some industrialized countries, where Allopathic Medicine has over shadowed more holistic, natural approaches, these surface discolorations are misinterpreted as damage rather the result of debilitating agents being drawn to the surface. People don't look upon these marks as a healing process or the importance of the after effect they just see circular markings, but once people understand what these marks are, the colour the patterns of the marks depending on the level of stagnation in that area, the range of colour from the marks can vary from bright red to dark purple, usually lasting up to 3 days to one week sometimes longer if the person is very sick or sedentary. If there is no stagnation present, there will be only a light pink mark which disappears in a few minutes to a couple of hours. Where there is old trauma or injury may require multiple cupping treatments to remove all

stagnation. You will find in follow up treatments the marks will be visibly lighter and lighter as the pathogens are systemically removed from the body.

Now in the twenty first century alternative therapies are becoming more popular, cupping therapy is now receiving additional credit and the world of medicine are recognizing that alternative therapies do have great beneficial to our health. More people are turning back to the beginning to find alternative healing. People are now looking for more choices, other than drugs, their wanting something none invasive, calming, and relaxing. Cupping has developed into a very popular technique. By what we see and read through the media, papers and magazines, especially in America,

**Victoria Beckham was photographed with cupping marks on her back; Victoria had purple patches running down her spine as she arrived at Heathrow Airport.**

**Denise Richards was also photographed with cupping marks, the 39-year-old model and actress showed of her treatment on her back as she was pictured in Malibu.**

**Gwyneth Paltrow appeared at a film premiere with her cupping marks on her back.**

**Olympic swimmer Wang Qun hoping her marks would lead her to a place on the medal podium.**

**Stephanie Rice the Australian swimmer who won gold medals in the Olympic showed her marks of cupping therapy.**



1. Rubber pump cup (Hong Kong 1990s)
2. Yak horn cup (Tibet 1980s)
3. Screw top vacuum pump (Hong Kong 1990s)
4. Bronze cup (Tibet 1980s)
5. Tin cups (Tunisia 1990s)
6. Vacuum pump cups (France 1800s)
7. Bamboo cups (Vietnam 1990s)
8. Glass cup (France 1850 – very delicate)
9. Glass cup (Bulgaria 1990s)
10. Glass cup (United States Civil War period 1861 – 1865)
11. Glass cup (UK 1800s)
12. Tin cup (France 1800s)

Source: ICS BY Sharon Baird