**Gua Sha**
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When we think about Chinese medicine, we usually think about acupuncture needles and herbs. Another wonderful tool and healing technique used in Chinese medicine is Gua Sha.

Gua Sha is performed by swiftly rubbing (called ‘Gua’ in Chinese medicine) the surface of lubricated skin with a round-edged, comb-like instrument in downward strokes. This action intentionally raises a small temporary rash (known in Chinese as ‘Sha,’ also known as petechiae/rash in Western terms) in the treated area. You will feel a rubbing and slight burning sensation, but it is not painful.

In Chinese medicine, pain and disease are said to be caused by stagnation or congestion of qi and blood. Gua Sha increases the movement of qi and blood and allows the body to restore its natural functioning.

**What Conditions Can Gua Sha Help?**

Gua Sha can help release unwanted **neck and shoulder tension** that comes with computer work and the busy-ness of our day (like running around and commuting). It is also prescribed for **chronic muscle tightness** from overuse or injury. It can be effectively used in the treatment of **colds and coughs** to relieve congestion and help increase the body’s immune response.

**How Does Gua Sha Do This?**

The secret of gua sha lies in how this treatment encourages the vigorous movement of blood to the surface of the body. When blood moves and circulation is enhanced, the body can help heal the area that needs to be healed. This is how gua sha helps the body’s own healing process.

**Is there Scientific Research About Gua Sha?**

In the last decade, Western studies have started to investigate how Gua Sha works. A study from 2007 confirms that Gua Sha increases the surface
circulation of blood by 400% and that increased surface circulation continued at a significant level for 25 minutes following treatment. Each individual experienced a subjective decrease or complete resolution of pain [1]. A 2009 study showed that as enzymes are released to breakdown the petechiae (small broken blood vessels under the skin created by the Gua Sha treatment), an anti-inflammatory effect is created [2]. This helps explain why Gua Sha is useful in the treatment of colds and even allergy symptoms.

Other studies have looked at Gua Sha in the treatment of migraine [3], neck and lower back pain [4], chronic neck pain [5], and hepatitis [6]. Current studies have been small but warrant further investigation especially in understanding Gua Sha’s effects on the body’s immune process.

Gua Sha Conclusion

Gua Sha is a safe, non-invasive treatment that is usually applied to the back of the body or the limbs. The rash usually fades in 2-4 days and patients are advised to relax the day of treatment, avoiding working out, fasting or large meals and alcohol, to allow the body to repair.


