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Scraping (Gua Sha) Therapy

Traditionally known as Gua Sha (pronounced "Gwa Shaw"), scraping was, and still is, a common form of folk medicine throughout China and Asia. Gua means to scrape, Sha refers to the stuck blood in the subcutaneous tissue before and after it is raised as petechiae (reddish, elevated, millet-like skin blemishes) that is created from the scraping.

The benefits of scraping are numerous. It moves stuck blood, promoting normal circulation to the muscles, tissues, and organs directly beneath the surface treated, and stimulates the related meridians & acupuncture points to regulate the dysfunctions of the corresponding organs. The patient often experiences immediate changes in stiffness, pain and mobility. Normal bodily processes are restored by the movement of fluids, as nutrients are carried to the tissues and metabolic wastes are carried away.

In the treatment, to protect the skin, oil is put on the affected area. Then you "scrape" the area. Very soon the skin shows red spots and blemishes (petechiae). This is the Sha and it indicates the locations of sick muscles/tissues and that are releasing toxins or wastes. You may feel discomfort coming from the sick tissues while scraping. It is interesting to note that there will be no Sha or discomfort if you are scraping healthy tissues. Although there are some blemishes on the skin after the treatment, it's quite different from a traumatic type of bruise or hemorrhage (where the capillaries rupture). The blemishes are more similar to a hickey and often times the individual won't even know they have the blemish. The Sha will usually disappear within a few days.

After Scraping Therapy, you should keep warm (avoiding wind, cold shower as well as cold drink) to ensure your body's self-healing process can work well. In some cases, some people may have a "healing reaction" (like feeling sore and even stiff) for a few days. This is from the release of the stored up toxins in the muscles/tissues. Then afterwards, as the red spots fade, you can feel the improvement throughout body, especially the problems treated.

Because Gua Sha is safe, simple and effective and does not require any complex medical diagnosis, it is often considered to be a folk medicine. Meaning, for thousands of years, lay people have been using Gua Sha successfully as a first option, often making the need for more complex medical treatment unnecessary. With this said, many people find that the benefits of scraping are enhanced with other Classical Chinese medical modalities such as Acupuncture and Chinese Herbs.

Scraping Directions

1. Put oil on the skin of the affected area.
2. Using a Chinese porcelain soup spoon or a jar lid (baby food jar lid, Snapple bottle jar lid, pickle jar lid) press down firmly on the skin of the affected area and scrape. This consists of applying consistent, rapid 3-5 inch scraping strokes on the skin of the affected skin. Creating sufficient friction to raise the Sha, and release the toxins. **NOTE:** This is easier than it sounds. It is literally the same motion as scraping a burned pan. Another way to look at it is that there is a tar between the skin and the muscles. You need to use a scraping motion to break the tar up. If you do more of a stroking motion the tar will just ooze back to the original spot. You want to break up the tar.
3. Initially one will be able to start to see a few red spots and that will guide you to the areas where you should focus your scraping. Generally speaking the stroke of the scrape will feel gritty, snappy or choppy, also indicating this is an area to focus your scraping. **NOTE:** Rubbing the skin will create a reddish/pink mark on the skin. This is not Sha which is the red, rash-like blemish that looks like a more like a hickey. Often initially this can be seen as little red dots coming up through the skin that with continued scraping turn into a larger blemish.
4. Continue for up to 5 - 10 minutes staying in that one spot until sufficient Sha comes up. The desired level of Sha depends on the individual's condition, constitution, and other such factors. **NOTE:** Scraping can be uncomfortable and that is okay. But it should not be painful. If the Scraping hurts, use less pressure and take more time. Many of these holdings are unconscious and not logical or reasonable, the individual may not ready to be release the holdings. With no judgment, trust and honor that. Be patient and gentle, this is a healing process.