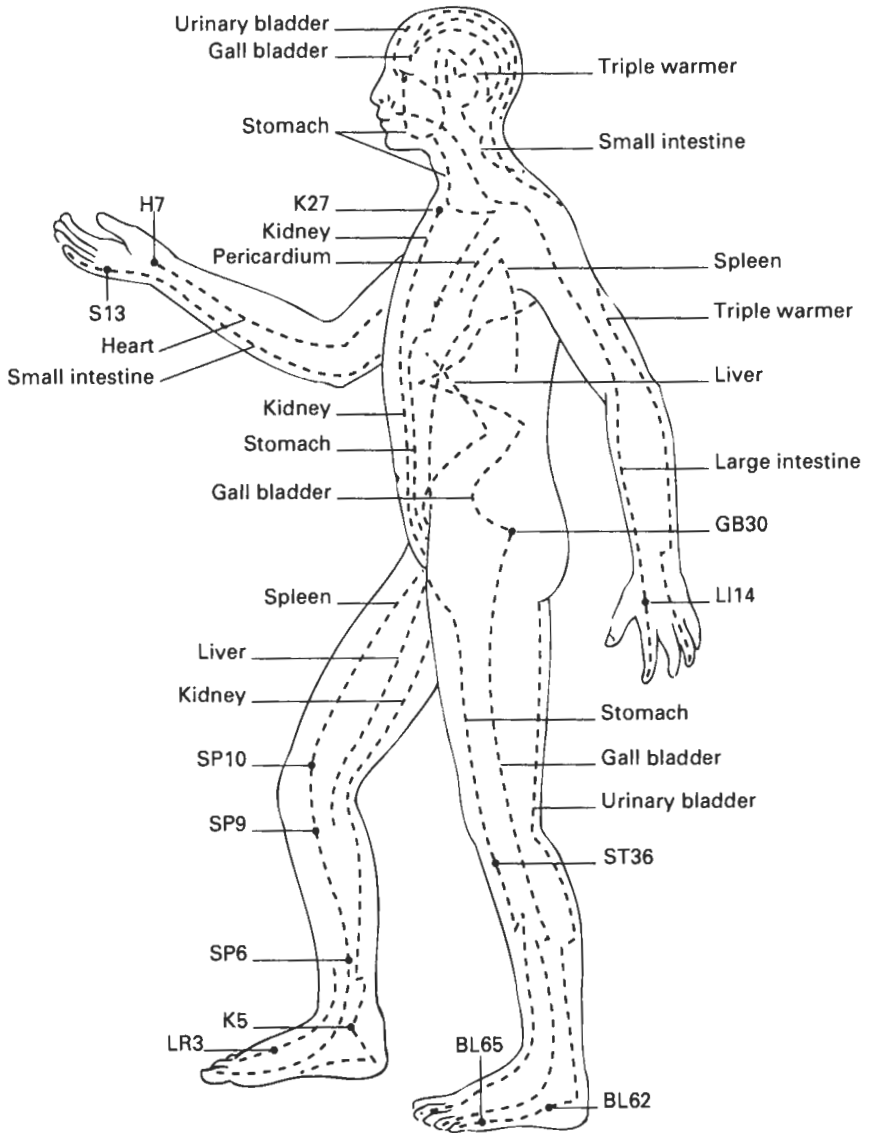


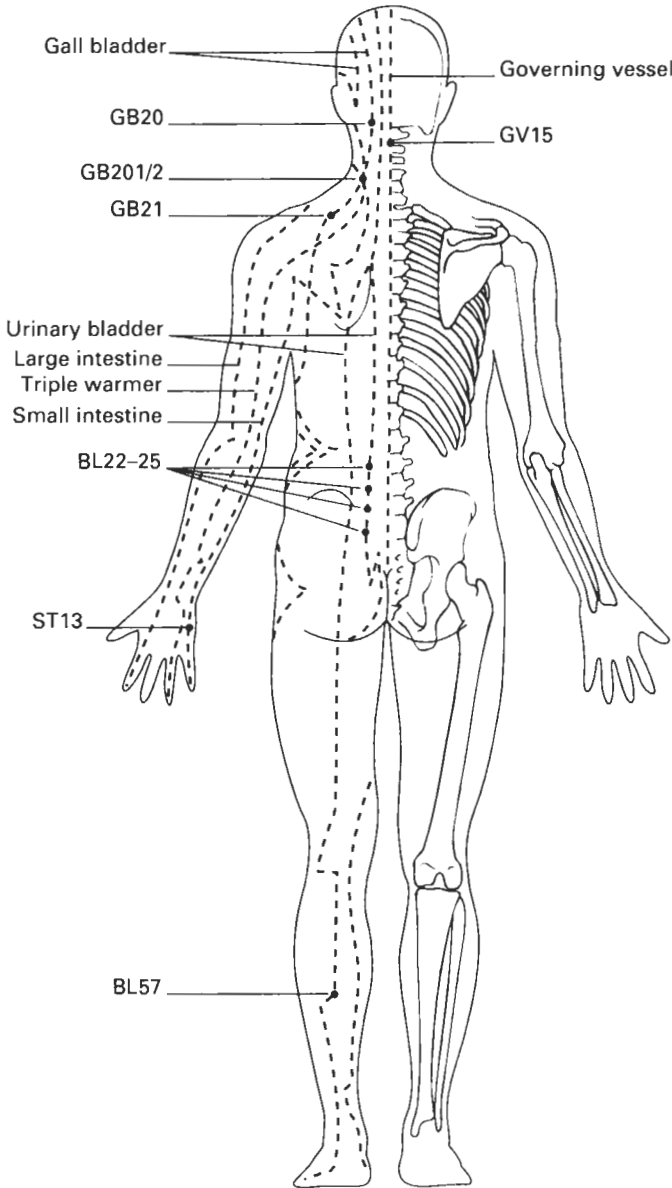
The main channels – front view

variable depth inside the body and only coming to the surface at certain places. (They have been compared to the District Line of London's underground system.) The 'points' mostly lie on the channels at places where they run near the surface. A few points (the so-called extrameridian points) do not lie on channels. Some 365 acupuncture points are



The main channels – side view

described, but in practice many fewer are used. (The correspondence with the number of days in the year is doubtless not coincidental.) The points all have Chinese names which often sound poetic in translation (Sea of Blood, Gate of Dumbness, Crooked Spring), but Western acupuncture books use a more prosaic system of numbering, which is more or less standardized.



The main channels – back view

Location of the channels

A total of 59 acupuncture channels is described; of these only 14 possess acupuncture points. Of the 14, 12 are paired and 2 are midline, therefore unpaired. Their names are given in Table 2.1.

Lengths and thicknesses

Needles come in varying lengths and thicknesses. The most useful needle is 30–40 mm in length and either 0.25 mm or 0.30 mm in diameter. The thicker needles are easier to insert but more painful for the patient. Shorter needles are 15 mm in length and are also thinner, either 0.15 or 0.20 mm in diameter. These are useful when shallow insertion, with more gentle stimulation, is desired. Longer needles are needed for deep needling, for example over the lower back; for this, needles 50 mm in length are often used. They need to be fairly stout (0.30 mm) since otherwise they will be difficult to insert. Still longer needles are available and may on occasion be needed to reach deep structures such as the piriformis muscle.

Using the needles

The technique of inserting the needles is simple but requires practice if it is to be done skilfully and relatively painlessly. Acquiring good needle technique is an important part of achieving success in acupuncture. It is *customary to begin by needling oranges*, but these don't give the same sensation as needling patients. A better simulation can be achieved by



Techniques for inserting needles

placing a piece of thin card over the orange and needling through this. A still better plan is to practise on oneself (see Chapter 19). This has two advantages: one learns exactly what the patient is going to experience and there is an excellent incentive to avoid overstimulation!

In what follows I describe the process of needle insertion in a number of steps. This is to some extent artificial, since in practice the needle is inserted in a smooth continuous action, but it is convenient to analyse it in this way in order to clarify how it works.

A. Preliminaries

- The patient needs to be positioned properly. The details vary according to the area to be treated; this will be discussed later (in Part 3) in