

# NATIONAL POST

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## Justin Trudeau uses 'cupping' — ancient skin therapy popular among athletes, celebrities — photos reveal

*'We can confirm that he indeed uses that treatment,' said the PM's press secretary. She did why he does so, who provides it, or whether it has been helpful*



The telltale signs of cupping on Justin Trudeau's arm.



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Justin Trudeau, the prime minister, engages in cupping, an ancient skin suction therapy that has seen renewed popularity in modern times among high-level athletes and lifestyle celebrities.

This was revealed Monday in photographs that accompanied Trudeau's appearance on sportswriter Jonah Keri's podcast, which show two circular reddish bruises on his left forearm.

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“We can confirm that he indeed uses that treatment,” said press secretary Andrée-Lyne Hallé. She did not answer the National Post’s questions as to why he does so, or for how long he has, who provides it, or whether it has been helpful.

From documented ancient origins in China and Egypt, cupping has lately been a fad promoted by trendsetters from Gwyneth Paltrow to Justin Bieber. Olympian swimmer Michael Phelps’ appearance at the Rio Games with his shoulders and back covered in the telltale bruises caused a resurgence in interest. Tennis star Serena Williams has also said she does it, but more for relaxation than for any targeted therapy.



Adam Scotti/PMO

The traditional method is known as fire cupping, in which alcohol is set alight on a cotton swab to remove oxygen from the cup before applying it to the skin, creating a seal. Other methods involve mechanical suction.

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“It works so, so well,” said Sarah Kreitzer, a registered acupuncturist and owner of Acupuncture Center Toronto. “From a Western perspective, it flushes an area with fresh blood and oxygen. So if an

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area is injured, then it helps restore the tissue that way.”

“From a Chinese medicine perspective, it helps suck out pain, disease and tension from the body,” she said.

On the forearms, as in Trudeau’s case, it would most likely be used for conditions like carpal tunnel, tendonitis, repetitive strain or elbow problems, Kreitzer said.

Musculoskeletal problems are the most common target of cupping, but it is also used as a preventive therapy and even as a spa treatment.

In Chinese traditional medicine, an injury is seen as a blockage of Qi, which literally means “breath” or “air,” but is used to mean something like a life-giving force that flows through the body. Cupping unblocks stagnated Qi, Kreitzer said.

“It’s said to suck out flu, which in Chinese medicine we actually call ‘wind,’” Kreitzer said. “We can help prevent a flu from getting worse, and at times if we catch the flu soon enough, we can actually prevent a flu, with help of the cups.”

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In a 2012 scientific review of cupping therapy’s efficacy for the journal PLOS One, Huijuan Cao and colleagues found 135 randomized controlled trials on cupping from 1992 to 2010.

Most were done poorly, leaving their results in doubt and vulnerable to bias. They found that “cupping therapy appears to be effective for various diseases/conditions, in particular herpes zoster, acne, facial paralysis, and cervical spondylosis. However, the main limitation of our analysis was that nearly all included trials were evaluated as high risk of bias.

“The mechanism of cupping therapy is not clear, but some researchers suggest that placement of cups on selected acupoints on the skin produces hyperemia (increased blood flow) or hemostasis (the stoppage of bleeding), which results in a therapeutic effect,” they wrote.

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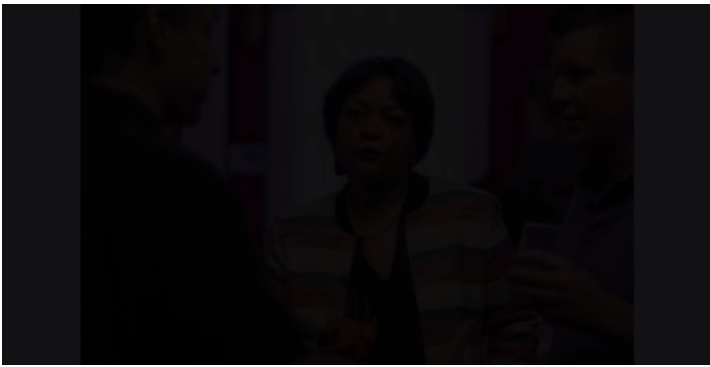
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