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# **Applied Kinesiology**

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What is applied kinesiology? Applied Kinesiology, commonly referred to as AK, is a system that evaluates structural, chemical and mental aspects of a person's health using manual muscle testing as its main tool along with with other standard methods of diagnosis. AK can be divided into two parts. The first part is the diagnostic arm of AK that is used as an aid in determining and monitoring someone's health problems. The use of manual muscle testing has become the signature of AK and is used to help determine what is functioning abnormally. When done in an accurate manner by a professional who has knowledge of the mechanics of the body and its physiological functions, muscle testing can help the practitioner achieve a more accurate diagnosis. The other arm of AK is the treatment portion. Guided by muscle testing, treatment may consist of anything from chiropractic manipulation to the use of specific nutritional supplements or from reflex and acupressure techniques to cranial work or dietary changes.

### Terms Defined

**Applied Kinesiology (AK):** a system that evaluates structural, chemical and mental aspects of health using manual muscle testing combined with other standard methods of diagnosis. AK, a non-invasive system of evaluating body function<sup>1</sup>

**Kinesiology:** 1. also known as biometrics. It is the study of body movement and is not the same as applied kinesiology. 2. a term used to describe numerous techniques that have been derived from the original technique of Applied Kinesiology involving the use of muscle testing

**Meridian:** energy channels which run beneath the skin; the body's energy flows through these channels as described in traditional Chinese medicine

**Osteopathic Cranial Techniques:** hands on techniques used to restore normal function and motion of the skull and its articulations, developed by Dr. Sutherland in the osteopathic profession, to help restore health

Applied kinesiology is mostly used by specially trained chiropractors to help their patients. AK has melded parts of many other healing modalities, including acupuncture-meridian therapies, osteopathic cranial techniques, herbology, dentistry, neurology and many more. This is the beauty of AK, its signature tool of muscle testing has allowed techniques from all these other fields to be used under the umbrella of Applied Kinesiology. Around the globe it is also used by naturopaths, acupuncturists, medical doctors, osteopaths, dentists, and other practitioners that are licensed to diagnose. AK is **not** taught to nutritionists, physical therapists or massage therapists because they are not licensed to diagnose. Treatments used in applied kinesiology to treat patients include:

- Joint manipulation
- Myofascial release therapy
- Cranial techniques
- Meridian therapy
- Clinical Nutrition
- Dietary Management
- Reflex procedures
- Homeopathy

When using AK to help diagnosis conditions in the body, a practitioner may perform a muscle test. The practitioner 'tests' the muscle by applying force against which the patient attempts to resist to determine if the muscle stays "strong" or facilitated or becomes "weak" or inhibited. Since muscle testing evaluates a person's nervous system in real

time, the test helps determine where a neurological imbalance resides in the patient. This test is used as part of a clinical assessment by trained professionals, and is used in conjunction with knowledge of anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, neurology and biochemistry, along with other forms of traditional “medical” diagnosis.

## **How AK Began**

In 1964 an American chiropractor named George J. Goodheart, Jr. made a discovery that was fundamental to the hands on healing arts. “He discovered that postural distortion could be explained by a specific muscle weakness, and that both the muscle weakness and associated postural distortion could be corrected with hands on techniques”<sup>2</sup>. When Goodheart observed someone with a painful, overly-tight muscle, he typically found that the opposite or antagonistic muscle (the muscle performing the opposing motion) would test “weak” or inhibited, thereby allowing the tight muscle to be tight in the first place, and he would treat the “weak” muscle to restore the proper balance to the opposing muscle. This concept of treating the weak muscle instead of the tight muscle was revolutionary at that time, and still is!

In the beginning, AK was directed toward correcting structural imbalances that were caused by poorly functioning muscles. At first, Dr. Goodheart and those he taught only had a few techniques that improved or changed muscle function. Sometimes the improvement was permanent and other times it was short-lived. Other times, there was no improvement in the dysfunctional muscle at all, meaning that normal function could not be restored. When this happened, Dr. Goodheart and others would investigate why this happened and try various therapeutic approaches to strengthen the “weak” inhibited muscle.

Over time, Dr. Goodheart, through his persistent studies of other healing modalities and other researchers, linked the techniques of muscle testing to the lymphatic system (the waste disposal system of the body) through what are now called neurolymphatic reflexes that were first described by an osteopath, Dr. Chapman. He also linked muscle testing to the nervous system via the spine and cranium, the vascular system through vascular reflexes, now called neurovascular reflexes first described by a chiropractor Dr. Bennett and the eastern ideas about energy flow through meridians from the ancient concepts of acupuncture.

From Dr. Goodheart's research and trial and error he found connections between the muscles of the body and the glands and organs of the body through the lymphatic reflexes, vascular reflexes, the spine and cranium and the acupuncture circuits. These connections along with the use of standard medical testing allowed Dr. Goodheart the ability to diagnose, treat and monitor a patient's response to treatment in more efficient and effective manner.

Dr. Goodheart continued to research and test his techniques, finding that he could incorporate the techniques of numerous other healing disciplines and devise totally new techniques on his own. Throughout his life, Dr. Goodheart continued to research and publish papers on AK. He founded the International College of Applied Kinesiology in 1973 to efficiently teach others about the techniques of AK. Dr. Goodheart frequently reminded those around him that "the nervous system is King"<sup>3</sup>. The intent of AK is to evaluate and correct nervous system irritation using natural therapies that allows the nervous system to function at an optimum level.<sup>4</sup> He also stated that "The body never lies; however, we must ask the right questions in the right way."<sup>5</sup>

## The Triad of Health

As in all truly holistic approaches, the applied kinesiologist treats the *whole* patient to achieve optimal function. The applied kinesiologist looks beyond your symptoms in order to understand why your system is dysfunctional, and to determine the basic underlying cause of your dis-ease. A major concept promulgated in AK is that people's health can be determined by the balance of three interconnected factors: structural, mental/emotional and chemical/nutritional. This Triad of Health, as it is called, is quite unique in today's healthcare or "disease-care" system, because rarely are all three interrelated components considered by one doctor. The triad is represented by an equilateral triangle. Structural factors form the base, with the chemical/nutritional and mental/emotional factors as the sides. If one of the factors is out of balance, it will affect the others and a person will experience poor health. In AK, all three aspects of the triad are examined in order to determine which factor is the primary cause of the problem in order to determine the correct treatment approach.

Let's discuss what each factor includes and how it affects your health.

- **Structural**

The structural component mainly involves the spinal and cranial sacral systems as well as all the other joints, muscles and connective tissues of the body. Without proper structure your body cannot function optimally. This can lead to everything from vitamin deficiencies to acupuncture circuit disturbances and organ and gland dysfunction. Not only pain, but migraines, irritable bowel and hormonal imbalances are among the long list of

conditions that may be instigated by poor structure. It is also common for a structural problem in the feet to cause dysfunction in distant, seemingly disconnected areas of the body such as the shoulder or jaw, and there are techniques within AK to evaluate this.

### **Mental/Emotional**

Applied kinesiologists often employ structural, nutritional, detoxification, meridian, and homeopathic therapies. The way that the chemical/nutritional side of the triad can cause a mental emotional issue is becoming clear in the research. An example is that low levels of vitamin D or folic acid can cause depression and that low blood sugar can provoke a panic attack. It is also becoming common knowledge that when you are experiencing a high level of stress numerous changes occur in your physiology such as high levels of detrimental stress hormones being secreted by your adrenal glands. Acute and chronic stress can trigger a heart attack or increase your risk of diabetes and other chronic diseases. Also, in AK, there are specific techniques to uncover and treat possible emotional issues that are leading to more than psychological symptoms.

### **• Chemical/Nutritional**

This side of the triangle includes biochemistry, nutrition, diet and the functioning of your digestive tract. Each person has about 5000 chemical reactions occurring each second in each of the billions of cells in the body. In order for your very complex human machine called your body to function optimally, it needs optimal fuel at optimal rates. Balancing your intake of nutrients, and ensuring that your digestive system assimilates and uses the nutrients efficiently is paramount to the applied kinesiologist and to your achieving and maintaining excellent health. Improving digestive function and determining what you should and should not eat along with what types and forms of

supplements you need is an integral part of applied kinesiology.

### **Terms defined: Triad of Health**

The triad of health is represented by an equilateral triangle: structural factors are the base, with mental/emotional and chemical/nutritional factors forming the sides. The three sides have to be in balance in order for a person to have optimum health.

## **Five Factors of the IVF**

In AK, most of the examination and treatment procedures “relate to the nervous, lymphatic, and vascular systems, along with the relationship of cerebrospinal fluid with the cranial-sacral primary respiratory motion, and with the meridian system” (p.13).<sup>5</sup> So what exactly does this mean? Dr. Goodheart related these five factors to the spinal column and nervous system and coined the term “five factors of the IVF” to describe the five factors that are used in both the diagnostic arm of AK and the treatment arm of AK. These factors are of course related to the Triad of Health. Let’s look at each factor briefly in order to better understand how they affect your health.

- **Nervous system (N)**

The “N” relates to disturbances in the nervous system, due to spinal subluxation or other irritants such as, nerve “pinching” or entrapments, nerves or nerve receptors that are improperly stimulated. These irritants can relate to

anything from balance mechanisms to pain responses. The “N” also refers to nutrition due to its effect on the nervous system. Removal of the subluxations or other improper nervous system stimuli is a major focus of chiropractic and has become much more effective with the use of applied kinesiology.

**Terms defined: Subluxation**

1. A subluxation in the chiropractic sense occurs when a joint between two vertebrae (or other articulations) becomes fixated or unable to move through its normal range of motion.
2. Medically, a subluxation is very mild dislocation of a joint.

- **Neurolymphatic reflexes or Chapman reflexes (NL)**

These are reflex locations on the body have been found to affect a specific muscle and organ or gland. These reflexes were discovered in the 1930s by Dr. Frank Chapman. He found tender areas in the body, which he believed were caused by an increase or congestion in the lymphatic system. He treated this by hands on manipulation of the area for a period of time, which led to lymphatic drainage and positively affected his patients’ health. Dr. Goodheart incorporated Chapman’s work into AK by correlating various muscles with their neurolymphatic points and using a similar treatment technique as Chapman to help restore normal nervous system reactions and muscle function.

- **Neurovascular reflexes or Bennett reflexes (NV)**

Terrance J. Bennett, a chiropractor, discovered these reflexes in the early 1930s. The vast majority of these reflex points are located around the head. It was believed that these affect the circulation in the vascular system of various organs and glands. Dr. Goodheart incorporated these reflexes into applied kinesiology and found that stimulating these points by light touch helped to restore nervous system function and “strengthen” related muscles, thereby leading to improved health.

**Terms defined: Vascular system**

A system of vessels and tissues that carry or circulate fluids such as blood or lymph throughout the body.

- **Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF)**

The “CSF” of the five factors relates to the pioneering work of Dr. Sutherland. His discovery of cranial motion and the cranial sacral respiratory system gave Dr. Goodheart an effective tool to impact the movement of the bones of the skull and sacrum thereby influencing the cerebral spinal fluid and the body as a whole.

- **Acupuncture Meridian Connectors (AMC)**

The “AMC” of the five factors refers to the interrelationship of the meridian points along the both sides of the spine and to spinal subluxations. Each of the acupuncture points or “association points” as they are called, associates to other meridians such as, the liver or spleen meridians. Imbalances in the AMC’s can affect the organs or glands

they relate and can cause spinal subluxations in the adjacent vertebrae, and vice versa.

## **An AK examination**

To start, the practitioner asks the patient detailed questions about their health. This helps give the practitioner some direction for their examination. A good health history can help determine whether the cause of the problem may be more: structural, chemical/nutritional, mental/emotional or a combination of the three. Dr. Goodheart always said “if you listen to the patient long enough they will tell you what is wrong with them”. A practitioner who uses AK may also observe the patient’s posture, gait, muscle strength and range of motion. When doing muscle testing in AK, the goal is not to evaluate how much power a muscle produces. Instead, the AK practitioner uses muscle testing to evaluate how the nervous system controls the muscles. These observations are used in conjunction with more standard examination methods, such as, doing a traditional physical, orthopedic or neurological exam or requesting x-rays or lab tests. The patient may also be tested for sensitivity to food or environmental factors.

The website of the International College of Applied Kinesiology ([www.icakusa.com](http://www.icakusa.com)) points out that applied kinesiology is not intended to replace standard examinations or treatment procedures. It is designed to be used by chiropractors and other licensed to diagnose professionals as a tool to help in the diagnosis and treatment a patient’s health.

## **Goals of AK**

Applied kinesiology is designed to be part of a holistic approach to health and healing. It is not designed to cure

cancer, arthritis, heart disease, diabetes or infections. However, it can often have a tremendous impact on people with these and other conditions by helping to restore normal bodily functions. Treatment with AK can help someone achieve more normal endocrine (gland), digestive, immune and other internal organ functions. AK can also help restore a person's postural balance, correct gait (walking) impairments, eliminate pain and improve the range of motion in the joints and limbs of the body. It may also intervene in some degenerative processes to help delay or prevent pathological conditions.

## **Benefits of AK**

One of the main ideas of AK is to find the root of someone's health problems, not just to treat the symptoms. Practitioners of AK look at the body as a whole, not in parts, and they use holistic techniques to promote healing of the whole person, not just one part at a time. By eliminating the root of the problem, the patient achieves a better level of health, resulting in less symptoms and a potentially more permanent "cure" can be attained.

Conditions that people often seek the advice of an AK practitioner for include:

- Depression
- Muscular aches and pains
- Spinal pain
- Skin disorders
- Allergies
- Trauma due to accidents

- Stress and tension
- Chronic fatigue
- Low energy levels
- Vertigo

AK is also used by athletes and other people in sports to treat sports related injuries. Athletes and many weekend warriors have reported better endurance and performance, as well as enhanced strength when they are treated with AK.

## **AK and Sports**

AK can be used to help treat and prevent sports injuries and improve athletic performance. Dr. Goodheart was the first official chiropractor enlisted by the US Olympic team in 1979 for the Olympic Games in Lake Placid, New York. Numerous professional sports teams currently employ the skills of applied kinesiologists as part of their “medical” team. Since AK practitioners use a hands-on approach to diagnose and treat injuries, they gather information about each person’s unique neuromusculoskeletal system. That information can then be used to create specific treatment strategies to treat injuries from ankle sprains and herniated discs to TMJ issues and concussions. Since AK treatment is geared toward treating underlying causes such as a weak core or gait imbalance it is the perfect technique to help prevent future injuries. The data gathered can also help people safely increase the intensity of their workouts and exercise routines, while helping people learn to understand their current capabilities and limitations.

Often, athletes become injured when competing and training due to the enormous strain they put on their bodies and minds. Sometimes injuries occur because the person fails to warm up properly or due to overtraining. Other times, injuries occur due to repetitive motion. This may be more gradual, but can still become debilitating. AK can help pinpoint the problem, relieve the stress on the joints or muscles affected by and causing the injury, and help the patient learn strategies to prevent future injuries to that same area.

## **Practitioners of AK**

Practitioners of applied kinesiology must first receive their education in their own field of health care and be licensed to diagnose. For example, someone who wishes to become a chiropractor and a practitioner of AK must first complete the studies and training to receive the degree and license to be a chiropractor. Once that is achieved, the chiropractor can then study applied kinesiology as post graduate work. The basic course requires 100 hours of classroom and hands on study. At the end of this fundamental course, the person is tested for basic proficiency in AK. Further study in AK can lead to a practitioner receiving their diplomate status. The diplomate exam is more rigorous and requires the practitioner to have Completed over 300 hours of classroom study and hands on work and write at least two research papers to be eligible. Only then can the chiropractor used in our example receive the certification identifying him or her as a diplomate of the International Board of Applied Kinesiology.

Remember, in order to achieve the best results with applied kinesiology, you need to go to someone is not only licensed in his/her own field of medicine but proficient in

AK. When AK is used properly, optimum health and body function has an excellent chance of being achieved.

## Sources

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