

Acupuncture

Physiotherapy Department

Patient Information Leaflet

Please read this leaflet carefully and ask your physiotherapist if there is anything you do not understand, or if you have any other concerns.

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who are considering acupuncture to help relieve pain. It includes information on what acupuncture is, its benefits and risks and what happens when you have acupuncture treatment.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture comes from traditional Chinese medicine which dates back 3,000 years. It is based on the concept of treating the whole body and the body's ability to return to its natural, balanced state of health.

Western medical acupuncture is the use of acupuncture after a proper medical diagnosis. It is based on scientific evidence that shows the treatment can stimulate nerves under the skin and in muscle tissue.

This results in the body producing pain-relieving substances such as endorphins. It is likely these substances are responsible for any beneficial effects seen with this form of acupuncture.

Traditional acupuncture is based on the belief that an energy, or 'life force', flows through the body in channels called meridians. This life force is known as qi (pronounced "chee"). Practitioners who have traditional beliefs about acupuncture believe that when qi does not flow freely through the body, this can cause illness. They also believe acupuncture can restore the flow of qi, and so restores health.

Who will give me the treatment?

Acupuncture is performed by fully qualified physiotherapists who have undertaken further training in acupuncture once they have their qualification in physiotherapy. This means your physiotherapist is bound by a professional code of conduct through the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) and is regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

What are the benefits of acupuncture?

Acupuncture can help relieve pain caused by nerve and muscular pain. It will be combined with other physiotherapy treatments such as exercise, manual therapy and lifestyle advice.

What are the risks of acupuncture?

Acupuncture is safe when it is conducted by a qualified practitioner.

However, there are some mild, short-lasting side effects that sometimes occur. It is important that we tell you about these so that you can make a decision about whether to have the treatment.

- You may feel drowsy after the treatment. For this reason, we advise you not to drive home afterwards.
- Minor bleeding or bruising around the acupuncture sites (about four people out of one hundred may get this).
- Pain during treatment (about two people out of one hundred may get this).
- Existing symptoms can get worse to begin with (about three in one hundred people have this). Do not worry, as it is often a sign that the treatment will work.
- Some patients may faint especially during their first treatment.
- Serious complications are very rare (about two people in 10,000 get them) but could include:
 - Damage to an internal organ caused by the needle
 - Infection
 - Injury to nerves
 - Allergic reaction

What are the alternatives?

Acupuncture is one of a number of options used by physiotherapists to help you. Following your assessment, your physiotherapist will discuss the treatment options with you and then you can decide whether you would like to have acupuncture.

What happens before acupuncture treatment?

You will need to have something to eat during the two hours before your treatment.

You will have an assessment where a physiotherapist will ask you about your condition and your past medical history. You will need to be in good general health to have acupuncture. If you have one of the following conditions, this may affect your treatment:

- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Haemophilia (a rare condition that affects the blood's ability to clot)
- Reduced immunity
- Low blood pressure
- Heart problems or have a pacemaker
- Have a metal allergy
- Have an infection in the area to be treated
- Have a phobia to needles (you are scared of needles)
- You are pregnant
- You are taking anticoagulants (medication to thin your blood)

The physiotherapist will explain the treatment to you and if you would like to continue, you will need to sign a consent form.

What happens during acupuncture treatment?

- You will be asked to sit or lie down for the treatment.
- The physiotherapist will insert sterilised, single-use, disposable needles into specific acupuncture points in the body. The points used will depend on your condition.
- Some may be close to the area that is being treated and some may be further away.
- The needles may be inserted just under your skin or deeper into the muscle tissue. Once they are in place, they may be left in position for a few minutes, up to 20 minutes. Sometimes the needles will be stimulated by rotating them or pushed deeper to stimulate the surface of the bone. The needles do not go in to nerves.
- Your physiotherapist will monitor you during your treatment.

Will it hurt?

You may feel some of the following:

- Warmth or 'fullness' in the area being treated.
- Pins and needles, or numbness.
- Aching or discomfort around the needle.
- Sharp pain – this should only last a few seconds. If it lasts longer than this, please tell your physiotherapist.
- It is possible that you may feel nothing at all. However, this does not necessarily mean that the treatment has not worked.

These feelings are sometimes known as the acupuncture sensation, also called 'de qi'.

How long does the treatment last?

The course of acupuncture will consist of six sessions depending on your response to the treatment. Each session will last about 20 minutes.

What if I miss a treatment?

A course of treatment will be discussed with you and appointments will be agreed. Please let us know as soon as possible if you need to cancel so that we can offer the appointment to someone else and help keep our waiting list down. If you do not turn up for your appointment and do not contact us to let us know, we will discharge you.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following websites:

NHS Choices

[Acupuncture](#)

Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists

[What is acupuncture?](#)

References

Lin JG and Chen WL (2008). Acupuncture analgesia: a review of its mechanisms of actions. *American Journal of Chinese Medicine* 36(4) p635-645.

MacPherson H, Thomas K, Walters S and Fitter M (2001). A prospective survey of adverse events and treatment reactions following 34,000 consultations with professional acupuncturists. *Acupunct Med.* 19(2): p93-102.

Zhang J, Shang H, Gao X and Ernst E (2010). Acupuncture-related adverse events: a systematic review of the Chinese literature. *Bull World Health Organ.* 88(12): p915-921.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please call one of the following numbers:

If you are having treatment at either Russells Hall Hospital or Corbett Outpatient Centre, please contact:

Acute Physiotherapy Team on
01384 244231 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

or

If you are having treatment at any other location in the community (such as Brierley Hill Health and Social Care Centre, St James Medical Practice, Halesowen Health Centre, Guest Outpatient Centre and Stourbridge Health and Social Care Centre), please call:

Community MSK Physiotherapy Team on
01384 321605 (8.15am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:
<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/physiotherapy/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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