

Acupuncture in physiotherapy



Patient Information Leaflet

Name of your physiotherapist:

Contact details should you have any concerns:

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture can be used during physiotherapy. It involves inserting fine needles into specific points on the body in order to help reduce your pain. The needles may be placed near to or away from the painful area and may be left in for a short period of time, depending on the desired effect. Your physiotherapist may suggest using acupuncture alongside other techniques such as exercise and manual therapy, to complement the overall effectiveness of your treatment plan.

Acupuncture has been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine for thousands of years and is believed to help bring balance to the body's energy. When the energy life force, known as Qi (pronounced chee) is imbalanced, then the body may be more susceptible to pain or other illness and disease.

Modern research has shown that acupuncture can help to reduce pain by stimulating the brain to produce endorphins, also known as "happy chemicals". These are your body's natural pain killers and may also help to reduce stress and aid relaxation. It is also thought that inserting acupuncture needles into specific areas of the body can help to reduce tension in the surrounding tissues. This in turn may facilitate your movement and function and help to reduce pain.

Acupuncture may also be used by physiotherapists as part of rehabilitation following a stroke, or during treatments for respiratory disorders.



Is acupuncture right for me?

Unfortunately acupuncture is not a suitable choice of treatment for every patient and its effects are not necessarily the same for everyone. Some patients may experience a very noticeable improvement in their symptoms after one or two sessions. Other people may require longer. For some it may not work at all. This can depend on a number of factors, such as the severity or duration of your condition and any other medical conditions you may have. You do not have to be a firm believer in the effects of acupuncture in order for it to work!

Acupuncture has been shown to have undesirable effects in some patients, therefore it is the policy of Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust not to offer acupuncture for people who have:

- ☯ uncontrolled epilepsy or diabetes;
- ☯ confusion or an inability to co-operate;
- ☯ a severe fear of needles (phobia);
- ☯ infection or swelling in the area to be treated;
- ☯ an allergy to metals;
- ☯ blood clotting disorders such as haemophilia (an inherited condition that affects the blood's ability to clot);
- ☯ deep vein thrombosis (a blood clot in one of the deep veins in the body) or pulmonary embolism (a blockage in the pulmonary artery, the blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the lungs);
- ☯ unstable angina (chest pain that occurs when the blood supply to the muscles of the heart is restricted) or cardiac arrhythmias (a problem with the rate or rhythm of the heartbeat);
- ☯ children under 16 years of age.

There may be other reasons why acupuncture may not be an appropriate treatment for you. Your physiotherapist will discuss all of the potential risks and precautions, including your own medical history before deciding how to proceed.

Remember there are many other very useful treatment options available to your physiotherapist to help you with your pain if acupuncture is not suitable for you.

What are the risks involved?

Acupuncture is generally a very safe treatment when used by a practitioner who is appropriately trained. Our physiotherapists have been trained in the safe use of acupuncture either as post graduate study or as part of their undergraduate degree. In order to practise acupuncture our physiotherapists must adhere to a code of professional conduct and keep up to date with current developments by completing a minimum amount of study time every year.

Inserting a needle into the body carries with it some potential risks and acupuncture has been known to produce some side effects in certain people. Fortunately most of these are minor and your physiotherapist will discuss these thoroughly with you before beginning the treatment.

Risks and side effects which you may experience:

- ☯ bruising where the needle has been inserted;
- ☯ bleeding when the needle is removed;
- ☯ drowsiness following the treatment - it may, therefore, not be appropriate for you to drive immediately afterwards;
- ☯ dizziness or fainting – this is rare but can happen particularly on the first session or if you are prone to fainting during medical procedures. Removing the needles will allow you to recover, but the value of continuing with further sessions would need to be reassessed;
- ☯ temporary increase in pain – again this only happens in a small number of cases and usually only lasts for 24 hours. If this happens you should tell your physiotherapist at your next appointment;
- ☯ infection – all of our needles are sterile and are thrown away after use. The physiotherapist will wash his/her hands before and after treating you which will keep this risk to a minimum;

- ☯ pneumothorax (punctured lung) – this is an extremely rare but potential risk when needling around the thorax (below the neck and above the waist). Your physiotherapist will use specialised techniques and very small needles to keep this risk to a minimum.

Before starting acupuncture treatment you will be asked to sign a consent form to show that you understand the potential risks that the physiotherapist has explained to you and are happy to proceed. You can of course change your mind about receiving acupuncture at any stage and you will be offered a suitable alternative treatment plan.

What will the treatment involve?

Once it has been decided that acupuncture is a suitable treatment for you, your physiotherapist will discuss with you approximately how many sessions you will need.

Your treatment will be carried out in the physiotherapy department and you will be placed in a comfortable position either on the plinth or on a chair. Your physiotherapist will carefully insert the required number of needles, which may vary in number and size, but will usually be no more than 10 in total. These may be left in place for up to 25 minutes and the physiotherapist may stimulate them by turning the needles periodically during the treatment.

When a needle is inserted you may experience an unusual sensation but this is not usually described as pain. In Traditional Chinese Medicine this is known as “De qi”, which means “energy release”.

You may also experience other sensations throughout the treatment, such as a sense of warmth, cold or heaviness in the affected body part. We believe that this is a good thing and shows that the treatment is being effective.

When the needles are removed you may experience a “stuck needle” which is where the tissue has tightened and gripped the needle in place. This is not something to worry about and the needle will come out easily once the rest are removed or with a bit of gentle massage.

Once all of the needles have been removed you are able to slowly get dressed and leave the department. You may be asked to wait for up to ten minutes in the waiting room, particularly if you feel a little drowsy afterwards or if it is your first experience of acupuncture.

You may find that you feel more relaxed, with a general sense of improved wellbeing after your treatment and some patients find that they sleep a little better. Do not worry if you do not feel an improvement in your symptoms at first as this may take a few sessions. You must advise your physiotherapist if you experienced any of the side effects at your next session.



How do I prepare for acupuncture?

It is important that you have eaten within four hours before receiving acupuncture. Having treatment on an empty stomach can increase the risks of unwanted side effects.

You will need to be suitably dressed for your treatment so that the physiotherapist can insert the needles where necessary. A pair of shorts is usually fine for a lower limb problem and a vest for an upper limb or neck problem.

You may want to bring a friend or relative with you for your first session in case you feel a little drowsy and are unable to drive home.

Occasionally young children find watching a person have acupuncture upsetting. We therefore recommend that you avoid bringing them to your treatment session where possible, so that you can get the most out of your time with the physiotherapist.

It is important to let your physiotherapist know if you are unwell and/or are receiving treatment for another condition such as antibiotics for an infection or have had (or are due to have) any other injection or surgery. It is also important to tell your physiotherapist if you are in the process of having any dental treatment. It may be necessary to postpone your acupuncture until these treatments are completed.

If you have any concerns or questions about your treatment please don't hesitate to ask your physiotherapist at any time.

For more information you can visit...

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk

The British Acupuncture Council
www.acupuncture.org.uk

**The British Medical
Acupuncture Society**
www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

**The Acupuncture Association of
Chartered Physiotherapists**
www.aacp.org.uk

If you need this information in another language or format please telephone 0116 295 0994 or email: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Arabic

إذا كنت في حاجة إلى قراءة هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتنسيق مختلف، يرجى الاتصال بهاتف رقم 0116 295 0994 أو إرسال بريد إلكتروني إلى: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Bengali

যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে আপনার দরকার হয় তাহলে দয়া করে 0116 295 0994 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要將本資訊翻譯為其他語言或用其他格式顯示，請致電 0116 295 0994 或發電子郵件至：Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ માહિતી અન્ય ભાષા અથવા ફોર્મેટમાં જોઈતી હોય તો 0116 295 0994 પર ટેલિફોન કરો અથવા Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk પર ઇમેઇલ કરો.

Hindi

अगर आप यह जानकारी किसी अन्य भाषा या प्रारूप में चाहते हैं तो कृपया 0116 295 0994 पर हमें फोन करें या Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk पर हमें ईमेल करें

Polish

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem niniejszych informacji w innym języku lub formacie, prosimy skontaktować się z nami telefonicznie pod numerem 0116 295 0994 lub za pośrednictwem poczty elektronicznej na adres: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਜਾਂ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0116 295 0994 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਇੱਥੇ ਈਮੇਲ ਕਰੋ: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Somali

Haddii aad rabto in aad warbixintan ku hesho luqad ama nuskhad kale fadlan soo wac lambarka 0116 295 0994 ama email u dir: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Urdu

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان یا صورت میں درکار ہوں تو براہ کرم اس ٹیلی فون نمبر 0116 295 0994 یا ای میل پر رابطہ کریں Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk