

Acupuncture in Therapies

Patient information leaflet



Name of your therapist:

Contact details should you have any concerns:

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture can be used during treatment by allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, podiatrists and nurses. It involves inserting fine needles into specific points on the body in order to help reduce pain.

The needles may be placed near to or away from the painful area and left in for a short period of time, depending on the desired effect.

Your practitioner may suggest using acupuncture alongside other treatment techniques such as exercise or manual therapy to complement the overall effectiveness of your treatment plan.

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

In Western medicine, modern research has suggested that acupuncture may work by stimulating the body to produce endorphins and oxytocin. These are your body's own natural pain killers and stress-relieving chemicals.



Is acupuncture right for me?

Acupuncture is not a suitable choice of treatment for every patient and the effects may differ from person to person. Some people may experience a very noticeable improvement in their symptoms after one or two sessions. Others may require a little longer and for some people there may be no noticeable improvement at all.

You do not have to be a firm believer in the effects of acupuncture in order for it to work.

Acupuncture is normally a safe treatment when delivered by a trained, registered healthcare professional however it has been shown to have undesirable effects in some people. It is therefore 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 with the procedure
- ☯ A severe fear of needles (phobia)
- ☯ Signs of an infection or swelling in the area that would be treated
- ☯ Sepsis
- ☯ Allergy to metals
- ☯ Blood clotting disorders such as haemophilia (an inherited condition that affects the blood's ability to clot)
- ☯ Deep vein thrombosis (DVT - a blood clot in one of the veins of the body) or pulmonary embolism (PE - a blood clot in blood vessels in the lung)
- ☯ People with unstable cardiac conditions such as angina (chest pain that occurs when the blood supply to the heart is restricted) or cardiac arrhythmias (a problem with the rate or rhythm of the heart)
- ☯ Children under the age of 16.

There may be other reasons why acupuncture may not be an appropriate choice of treatment for you. Your practitioner 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 health care professional if acupuncture is not suitable for you.

What are the risks involved?

Our clinicians have been trained in the safe use of acupuncture as part of their undergraduate degree or by completing post graduate courses. In order to practice acupuncture they must adhere to a code of professional conduct and keep up to date with the current developments by completing a minimum amount of study time per year.

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

The side effects that you may experience include:

- ☯ Bruising where the needle has been inserted
- ☯ Bleeding once the needle is removed
- ☯ Drowsiness following the treatment – therefore it may not be appropriate for you to drive immediately afterwards
- ☯ Dizziness or fainting – this is rare but it can happen, particularly during 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 will need to be reassessed

- ☯ A temporary increase in your pain – this only happens in a small number of cases and should only last around 24 hours. If this happens you should tell your practitioner at the next appointment
- ☯ Infection – all of the needles that we use are sterile and thrown away after use. The practitioner will wash his/her hands before and after your treatment which will keep the risk of infection to a minimum
- ☯ Punctured lung (pneumothorax) – this is an extremely rare but potential risk when needles are inserted around the chest. The practitioner will use a special technique and smaller needles in order to keep this risk to a minimum.

Before starting your course of acupuncture treatment, your practitioner will explain all of the risks in detail and you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you are happy to proceed. You can change your mind about receiving acupuncture at any time and you will be offered a suitable alternative treatment plan.

What does the treatment involve?

Your practitioner will discuss approximately how many sessions you will need.

You will be helped into a comfortable position on the treatment plinth and the practitioner will carefully insert the required number of needles, this is not usually more than ten. The needles may vary in size and may be left in place for approximately 10 to 25 minutes. The practitioner may stimulate the needles by turning them periodically during the session.

When the needle is inserted into the skin you may experience an unusual sensation which is not normally described as pain. In TMC this is known as “De qi” which means “energy

release". You may also experience other sensations such as warmth, cold or heaviness in the area that is being treated.

When the needles are removed you may experience a "stuck" needle, which is where the tissue has tightened around the needle and gripped it 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.

After your treatment you may be asked to wait in the department for up to 10 minutes, especially if you feel a little drowsy or it is your first session.

Do not worry if you do not feel an improvement in your pain straight away as this may take more than one or two sessions.

You must advise your practitioner if you experience any side effects at your next session.



How do I prepare for acupuncture?

It is important that you have eaten within four hours before your acupuncture session, as receiving treatment on an empty stomach can increase the risk of fainting.

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

It can be useful to bring a friend or relative with you for your first session in case you feel drowsy and are unable to drive home afterwards.

It is important to let the practitioner know if you are unwell or receiving treatment for another condition such as antibiotics for an infection or you have recently had or are due to have an injection or any surgery. It is also important to let the practitioner know if you have had or are due to have any dental treatment. It may be necessary to postpone your acupuncture treatment until after your other procedures have been completed.

If you have any concerns or questions about your acupuncture treatment then please ask your practitioner at any time.

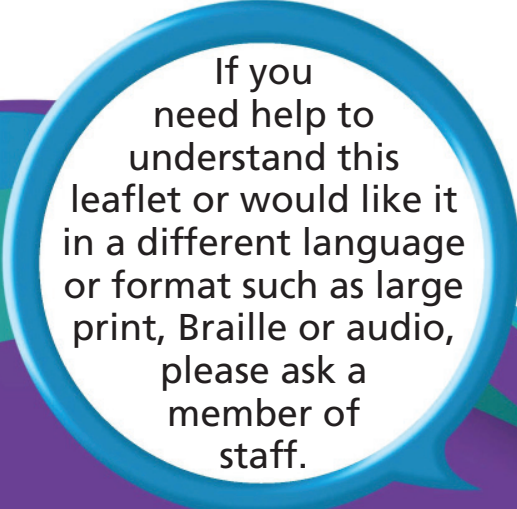
For more information you can visit...

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



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