

Acupuncture

Information and advice for patients

Pain Management

Please read the following information carefully and ask your practitioner if there is anything that you do not understand. Once you are happy that you understand exactly what will happen you will be asked to sign a consent form before treatment can start. Remember you can change your mind at any time, even if treatment has started.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of therapy in which a variable number of fine needles are inserted into specific points on the body. These can be either over the painful area or in areas away from your pain and are left in for a variable length of time depending on the effect required. Sometimes electro acupuncture is used where a small, non-harmful electrical current is passed through the needles or magnets which are placed over acupuncture points.

How does acupuncture work?

Acupuncture provides pain relief by stimulating the brain to produce natural pain-relieving chemicals called endorphins. In terms of traditional Chinese medicine, energy called Qi flows around the body in channels. Problems occur if this flow of energy is altered. Acupuncture works by stimulating the movement of Qi and restoring normal flow. It can take 3-4 treatments before benefit occurs.

What are the benefits of acupuncture?

Acupuncture is not a cure and affects everyone differently. Some of the benefits are:

- Decrease in pain.
- Improvement in sleep.
- Feeling less stressed and more relaxed.
- Feeling of well-being.

Is acupuncture safe?

Acupuncture is generally very safe. Serious side effects are rare- less than one per 10,000 treatments.

You need to be aware of:

- **Drowsiness** - A small number of patients feel drowsy after treatment. If you do we would advise you not to drive.
- **Bleeding and bruising** - This can occur after acupuncture in about 3% of treatments.
- **Pain** - This occurs during treatment in about 1% of treatments. Existing symptoms can get worse after treatment in less than 3% of patients. You should tell your practitioner about this but it is usually a good sign.
- **Dizziness and faintness** - This is rare but can happen particularly on the first treatment.
- **Allergies and infections** - These are very rare as only sterile, single-use disposable needles are used in accordance with national guidelines.

If there are any particular risks that apply to you these will be discussed with you prior to treatment starting.

Acupuncture will not be given if:

- You have a metal allergy.
- You have a needle phobia.
- There is infection where the needle is to be inserted.
- You have haemophilia.

You must inform the practitioner if you:

- Have a bleeding disorder, bruise very easily or are taking any anti-coagulants or blood-thinning medication such as Warfarin, Heparin or Clopidogrel.
- Have ever had a fainting fit or "funny turn".
- Have a pacemaker or other electrical implant.
- Have damaged heart valves or have any other particular risk of infection.
- Have diabetes.
- Are pregnant or trying to conceive.
- Have hepatitis, HIV or any other blood disorder.
- Have epilepsy.

I want to give acupuncture a try – what happens next?

If you want to try acupuncture please call us within four weeks of receiving this leaflet. This is so we can add your name to a waiting list. You will be offered an appointment with one of the team to discuss your pain and treatment.

If you want to go ahead with acupuncture or if you have any questions about it, please contact the pain service:

Telephone: 0121 507 4866 (please leave a message if we are busy)

Email: swbh.pain-plan@nhs.net

If we do not hear from you within four weeks, we will assume that you have decided that acupuncture is not the right approach for you, or it is not the right time.

Other Information

All practitioners, both physiotherapists and nurses, have undergone recognised post-graduate training on the use of acupuncture for the management of pain.

What happens now?

Once we have discussed your pain and are happy that you understand exactly what acupuncture is you will be asked to sign a consent form and treatment will begin. On average six sessions are given either once or twice weekly. If at any time you change your mind please inform your practitioner to discuss alternative treatments or to book a review appointment for you, whichever is the most appropriate.

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A Teaching Trust of The University of Birmingham

Incorporating the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, City Health Campus, Sandwell Health Campus and Rowley Regis Hospital.

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ML7018

Issue Date: March 2023

Review Date: March 2026