

Acupuncture Advice Sheet

What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture involves the insertion of fine needles into various parts of the body to stimulate or relax the body. There are different types of acupuncture:

- Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) which can be traced back as far as 1000BC and is based on Qi or energy flow.
- Western acupuncture which is based on the release of chemicals in the nervous system, some of which are pain relieving and healing. It also involves specific relaxation of muscles (trigger point acupuncture).

Research supports the effectiveness of acupuncture for pain relief and it is therefore used by physiotherapists as part of a comprehensive treatment plan.

Acupuncture needles stimulate physiological mechanisms in the central nervous system and local tissues causing the production of pain-relieving chemicals. A reduction in pro-inflammatory cells and an increase in anti-inflammatory cells reducing pain, swelling and inflammation in local tissues. It can also accelerate the initial inflammatory response encouraging secondary healing. Releasing opioids like substances to modulate pain signals. Acupuncture also stimulates the autonomic nervous system, by influencing both its sympathetic and parasympathetic components.

Why would I need this procedure?

To alleviate pain and inflammation

To utilise the body's natural hormones to restore body balance and provide an alternative to medication

To help your condition alongside other physiotherapy treatments.

Digestive issues

Gastritis

Irritable bowel syndrome

Hepatitis

Hemorrhoids

Eye ear and throat issues

Sinusitis

Sore throat

Musculoskeletal pain

Arthritis

Back pain

Muscle cramping

Neck pain

Sciatica

Emotional issues

Anxiety

Depression

Insomnia

Nervousness

Neurosis

Gynaecological issues

Menstrual pain

Infertility

Neurological issues

Headaches

Migraines

Neurogenic bladder dysfunction

Parkinson's disease
Postoperative pain
Stroke

What are the symptoms that have led to me having this procedure?

Acupuncture when used by physiotherapists can help to manage:

Pain
Muscle spasm
Tension
Inflammation
Stress

What are the alternatives?

Alternatives to Acupuncture include traditional medical pain relief such as the use of Painkillers and Injections.

Acupuncture usually supplements other treatments in physiotherapy such as:

- Exercise therapy
- Hands on soft tissue therapy such as massage, mobilisation or manipulation.
- Electrotherapy such as Therapeutic Ultrasound or TENS Machines.
- NICE guidelines state acupuncture should be combined with exercise, manual therapy and relaxation techniques

Precautions and contraindications

- Pregnancy
- Pacemaker or other electric implants
- Anti-coagulant medication
- Fear of needles
- Tendency to faint
- Immunosuppressive diseases
- Peripheral vascular disease or impaired sensation
- Hepatitis
- Frail or anxious patient
- Strong previous reaction to acupuncture
- Hyper/ hypotension
- Known metal allergy, especially stainless steel or nickel
- Previous seizure induced by an invasive steel or nickel
- Infected, thin or fragile skin
- Valvular heart disease
- Spontaneous bleeding or bruising
- Poorly controlled diabetes
- Poorly controlled epilepsy
- Acute haemorrhagic stroke

What are the expected benefits of treatment?

- It is expected that you will obtain some pain relief which may then lead to an improvement in your condition alongside other physiotherapy treatments.
- Alleviation of muscle spasm and tension
- Facilitation of the healing process
- Induction of local and general relaxation
- Promotion of general well-being

What should I do before treatment?

- Please make sure you have eaten within 2 hours before attending your appointment. This helps to regulate your body's blood sugars, which can be affected indirectly by acupuncture.
- Avoid caffeine. Caffeine can interfere with how Acupuncture works on your nervous system and avoiding this for approximately two hours before and after is advised.
- Ensure that you are well hydrated as this can enhance the effects of the treatment.
- Drowsiness can occur after treatment, although not in all cases. You may want to consider your transport options home prior to treatment, if you feel you may need some assistance.

Possible adverse effects:

Bleeding and bruising
Mild aggravation of symptoms
Mild pain at the injury site
Drowsiness
Dizziness
Nausea
Feeling faint
Stuck or bent needle
Headache
Allergy or infection
Pneumothorax

Acupuncture is generally very safe. Serious side effects are very rare – less than 1 per 10,000 treatments.

How long will the treatment last?

Your treatment sessions could last up to 30 minutes.

How will I feel afterwards?

Some patients feel better immediately.

Some patients may feel a warm or full sensation other patients do not feel anything at all.