

Acupuncture in physiotherapy

Department of Physiotherapy

Information for Patients

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What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of ancient Chinese medicine. In western medicine it is considered an alternative or complimentary therapy mainly used in managing pain relief.

Acupuncture involves inserting fine needles into certain points on the body which are selected depending on the condition being treated e.g. headaches. The therapist will then gently twirl or flick the needles to get a therapeutic response.

Acupuncture in physiotherapy is generally used for pain relief, but can also be used to aid muscle relaxation.

How does acupuncture work?

It is not fully understood in western medicine why acupuncture works but research is on-going. It is thought that the insertion of needles into different points of the body may stimulate sensory nerves beneath the skin, releasing endorphin hormones, which relax muscles and block pain signals to the brain.

Traditional eastern medicine works on the principle that we have energy running through our bodies called "Qi" (pronounced "chee"). It is believed that when the body is sick this energy flow is disrupted, which can be restored by using acupuncture and other therapies.

Will it hurt?

Acupuncture in itself is not often described as painful. A very brief sharp sensation like a pinprick is felt as the needle goes through the skin, followed by sensation that is different for each individual but is not usually described as "pain". Patients often describe this as a heavy, dull sensation. Your therapist will ask you to tell them what you are feeling during your treatment.

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Is acupuncture safe?

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

There is a very small chance of infection after acupuncture. In order to reduce this risk, only single-use, sterile, disposable needles are used. Therapists ensure they wash and clean their hands both before and during treatment.

Are there any side effects with acupuncture?

- You may feel drowsy or sleepy after treatment, so do not drive until this has passed.
- Minor bruising or bleeding after treatment happens in about 3% of treatments.
- Pain during treatment happens in about 1% of treatments.
- 3% of patients experience a worsening of existing symptoms. This is normally a good sign and should only last a couple of days. It means that the treatment is having an affect and further sessions may be helpful. Please tell your therapist of the symptoms you experience after treatment at your next visit.
- Fainting can happen in certain patients, particularly at the first treatment. This is rare, but to reduce any risk of this your first treatment is likely to be shorter.

It is important to let your therapist know if you:

- have ever experienced a fit, faint or funny turn.
- have a heart condition.
- have a pacemaker fitted or any other electrical implant.
- have a bleeding disorder.
- are taking medication to thin the blood (e.g. warfarin or aspirin) or any other medication.
- are pregnant or trying for a baby.
- have a metal allergy or scared of needles (phobia).
- are at higher risk of getting an infection (e.g. if you are taking immune-suppressant medication).

How should I prepare for my first acupuncture treatment?

- Read this leaflet and follow any additional advice from your therapist. Ask if you are unsure about anything. You will need to sign a consent form in order to go ahead with treatment.
- You may need to undress depending on the area of the body being treated, so please wear appropriate clothing or bring something you can change into.

- Please make sure that the body area to be treated is clean of any sweat or dirt before you attend. If you are having acupuncture to the facial area, this will need to be free of any make-up.
- Please have something to eat 1 to 2 hours before attending your appointment to reduce the chance of you feeling dizzy or light headed during treatment.

Is there anything I should do after my appointment?

For acupuncture to have its full effect you are advised to rest for a period after treatment, and if possible for the remainder of the day.

Drink plenty of water.

If you are feeling a little dizzy or light headed, a snack and a rest should help.

Contact details

Physiotherapy Departments:

Leicester Royal Infirmary	0116 258 5816
Leicester General Hospital	0116 258 4070
Glenfield Hospital	0116 258 3595

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

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