

# Acupuncture for children

Leicester Children's Hospital

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Information for Patients

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## What is acupuncture and how does it work?

Acupuncture treatment involves fine needles being inserted through the skin and left in position for a period of time (usually 20 minutes). The number of needles used varies depending on the type and area of pain to be treated. A course of acupuncture is 6 weeks. It is important to attend all appointments to gain the maximum benefit from treatment.

Acupuncture has been used for over 5000 years. In the last 30 to 40 years a considerable amount of scientific research has been carried out. This has allowed us to understand how it can help certain conditions including pain.

Acupuncture stimulates the nerves in skin, muscle and other tissues and can produce a variety of effects. It is known to increase the release of the body's natural pain killers (such as endorphin and serotonin) in pathways in the brain and spinal cord. When these substances are produced they change the way pain signals are received by the brain and can make pain feel better.

## Benefits

Acupuncture is not a cure for your pain but a treatment which can help it. The effect of acupuncture is different from person to person. Some of the benefits are listed below.

**Pain relief:** This can happen after 1 treatment or after 3 to 4 treatments. The effect can last from days to months.

**Improved sleep:** Some people notice they sleep for longer and the quality of their sleep improves.

**Relaxation:** Acupuncture can help you feel more relaxed. This in turn will help you cope better with your pain.

**Increased sense of wellbeing:** Acupuncture can help you feel better both physically and emotionally. It can also increase energy levels.

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## Treatment

On your first appointment the nurse will explain the treatment and ask you to rate your pain using a pain scale.

After a discussion with you and an assessment of your pain the nurse will decide where to place the needles. The number of needles used will depend on the area to be treated.

The nurses doing the acupuncture treatment are Registered Children's Nurses who have had additional training in acupuncture.

## Side effects

As with all treatments side effects can happen from acupuncture, they can include :

**Bruising/bleeding:** At the site where the needle was inserted.

**Drowsiness:** You may feel sleepy during or for a few hours after treatment.

**Dizziness/fainting/feeling sick:** This is rare; if it is severe treatment will be stopped.

**Increase in pain:** Your pain may feel worse after the first treatment. This is quite common and can be a positive sign that your body is reacting to the treatment. If your pain continues to be worse after 3 treatments the acupuncture treatment will be stopped.

## What happens after a course of acupuncture?

You will get 6 treatments on a weekly basis. On the last treatment the nurse will ask about whether the treatment has helped with the pain and ask you to rate your pain score again. If there has been an improvement and you would like to continue with the treatment you will be re-scheduled for a further course in 2 to 3 month's time.

## Contacts

If you have an questions before your treatment or at any time during the course please contact the children's pain nurses on 0116 258 5015 (answerphone).

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