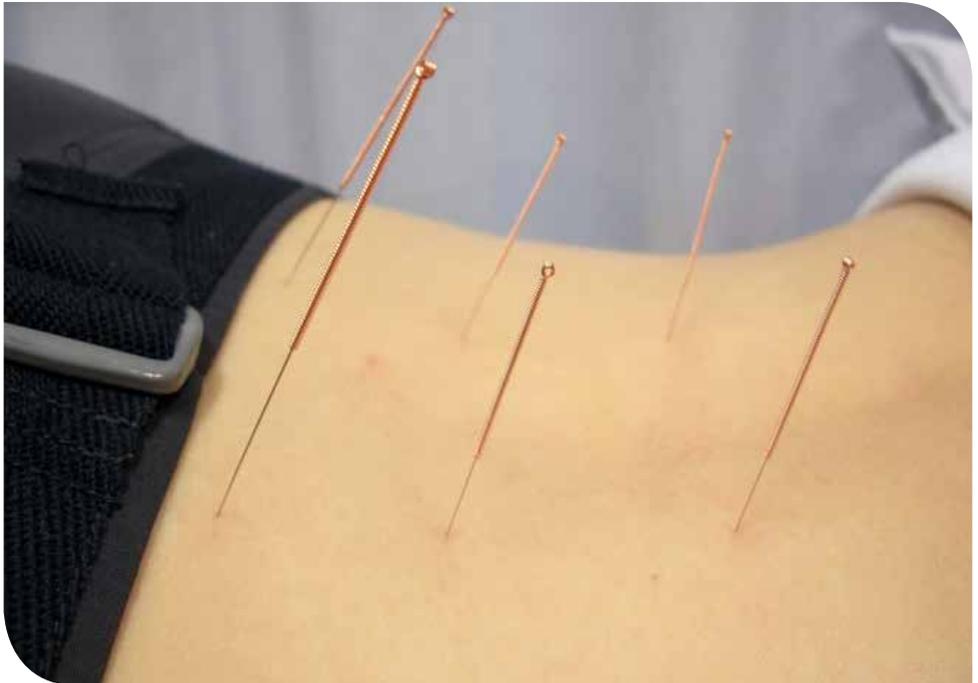


What you need to know about Acupuncture

Physiotherapy Department



Patient information leaflet

What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of therapy in which fine needles are inserted into specific parts of the body.

Acupuncture is one of the oldest recorded forms of medicine having been used for over 3000 years in China and in the West for over 200 years.

There are several theories as to how the effects are produced.

The traditional Chinese view is that Qi (read: Chi) energy flows freely through the body channels, or meridians, when it is in a healthy state. Illness or injury may block these channels and energy stagnates.

The stimulation of appropriate acupuncture points frees this stagnation and helps the body to return to its normal state of health.

More recently research has shown that acupuncture stimulates the brain to produce natural pain relieving chemicals – Endorphins – these help the body to heal itself and give pain relief.

Acupuncture also increases circulation to the injured or painful area which can stimulate healing.

Muscle spasm or tightness can also be reduced in the area around the needle.

Is Acupuncture safe?

Acupuncture is generally safe. Treatment will only be carried out by a therapist who has completed a specialist and approved course in acupuncture. Serious side effects are rare – less than 1 per 10,000 treatments. A very rare but more serious risk of acupuncture (when applied to the chest wall, shoulder and lower neck areas) is a puncture of a lung leading to a Pneumothorax (air in the chest cavity). If you experience shortness of breath and / or chest pain after treatment, you must seek emergency medical attention immediately. In the unlikely event of a needle stick injury, you will be asked to attend the occupational health department for a risk assessment.

Why have I been referred for Acupuncture?

Research has found that many different musculoskeletal conditions respond well to acupuncture.

Your physiotherapist or your doctor has referred you for acupuncture as they feel that your condition may respond to this type of treatment.

Current guidelines including the government produced NICE Guidelines for osteoarthritis and lower back pain do not recommend acupuncture for the treatment of these conditions. However, we may provide acupuncture on an individual bases – but please discuss this with your physiotherapist.

What will it involve?

A physiotherapist will complete a pre-treatment acupuncture check list and you will be required to read and sign a consent form.

If this is your first appointment with the physiotherapist they will need to complete an assessment with you in order to gain an understanding of your condition and determine whether or not acupuncture is appropriate for you.

It may be that the Physiotherapist does not carry out acupuncture on the first assessment.

Treatment will consist of insertion of fine needles. These are sterilised disposable and single use only, ensuring strict hygiene.

Will it hurt and how will I feel?

The needles give a sensation which is usually a temporary mild discomfort like a pinprick. This is often followed by a deep sensation which is normally felt as a tingling, ache or warmth.

The effects of acupuncture are cumulative meaning that the effects build up as the treatment progresses.

Initially treatments may occasionally temporarily increase your symptoms. This is not a bad sign as it usually means the acupuncture is working and your condition will respond well to treatment.

You may feel tired on the evening of your treatment.

Very occasionally a bruise may occur at the needle site: this is nothing to be concerned about.

Rarely, you may feel faint or lightheaded for a few minutes after treatment. This is nothing to be concerned about, but please inform your physiotherapist.

Does Acupuncture have side effects?

You need to be aware that:

- Drowsiness occurs after treatment in a small number of patients, and if affected, you are advised not to drive.
- Minor bleeding or bruising occurs after acupuncture in about 3% of treatments.
- Pain during treatment occurs in about 1% of treatments.
- Existing symptoms can get worse after treatment (less than 3% of treatments). You should tell your physiotherapist about this, but it is usually a good sign.
- Fainting can occasionally occur in certain patients, particularly at the first treatment.
- Single-use, disposable needles are used in the clinic.

Is there anything I need to tell my physiotherapist about?

Please let your physiotherapist know if you have:

- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Experienced a fit, fainted or had a “funny turn”
- Had a bleeding disorder
- Are pregnant or actively trying to get pregnant
- Metal allergies
- Taking any anti-coagulants to thin the blood (e.g. warfarin) or any other medication
- Damaged heart valves or have any particular risk of infection
- Any lung conditions or family history of pneumothorax

What do I need to do prior to treatment?

You need to have eaten a snack or meal prior to your appointment as Acupuncture can lower your blood sugar level. This can make you feel faint.

We advise that you:

- May want to bring somebody with you to accompany you home, at least on the first visit.
- May wait in the waiting room for up to 20 minutes prior to driving should you feel drowsy or nauseous.
- Do not attend if you have a severe cold or flu.
- Please contact the physiotherapy department if you are unable to attend for your appointment.
- Continue to take your medication-unless otherwise advised by your doctor.

Treatment

Each session is between 15-30 minutes long.

Some people are particularly good responders while others may see little benefit until they have had a few treatments.

If symptoms show no sign of improving after 3-4 sessions, we discontinue the treatment.

If you are benefiting from the acupuncture we offer up to 6 sessions.

What happens after my course of Acupuncture?

Once you have completed your course of acupuncture your physiotherapist will write a letter back to your GP.

If acupuncture was beneficial then your GP can refer you for a further course of acupuncture (for the same issue) after 6 months following your last appointment.

We are unable to accept referrals sooner than 6 months due to the demand on this service and to help limit your tolerance to acupuncture treatment.

References

- www.acupuncture.org.uk
- www.aacp.org.uk
- www.csp.org.uk
- www.nice.org.uk

Physiotherapy Department contact details

If you have any queries please contact the Physiotherapy Department.

Telephone: 01483 464153

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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