

Information for patients referred for Acupuncture in the Pain Management Department

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Aim of information

The purpose of this leaflet is to give information to patients who may be assessed for acupuncture therapy.

Please read this information carefully and ask your practitioner if there is anything that you do not understand.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is one of the oldest recorded forms of medicine, having been used for over 3,000 years. It is a form of therapy in which fine needles are inserted into specific points on the body. Modern science has shown that acupuncture stimulates the brain to produce natural chemicals called endorphins, which not only relieve pain, but also assist the body to heal itself.

Will it work for me?

Acupuncture does not work for everybody and every condition, but often good results are achieved where more conventional treatment has failed. The pain relieving effects of acupuncture build up as treatment progresses. Some people respond immediately, while others may see little benefit until they have had a few sessions: this is more likely with a chronic (long-standing) condition.

Is it painful?

When fine needles are inserted, a sensation like a pinprick may be felt; this should only give mild temporary discomfort, if any at all. During the treatment, a mild ache may be felt around the needles and occasionally a 'warm' feeling; this can be an indication the needles are doing their job. If this sensation is more intense, please inform your therapist.

Is acupuncture safe?

Acupuncture is generally very safe when carried out by suitably qualified practitioners. Serious side effects such as infection, nerve damage, or lung puncture are extremely rare.

Single use sterile disposable needles are used in the Pain Management Department

Are there common side effects?

- Drowsiness occurs after treatment in a small number of patients and if affected you are advised not to drive or operate machinery.
- Minor bleeding or bruising occurs after acupuncture in about 3% of treatments.
- Pain during treatment occurs in about 1% of treatments.
- Symptoms have been observed to worsen after treatment in about 3% of patients. You should tell your acupuncturist about this.
- Nausea, headaches, sweating.
- Sense of wellbeing may also occur as a result of treatment.

Please report any side effects to your practitioner.

How long does treatment take?

Generally the needles are inserted and left in place for approximately 20 minutes. The practitioner may move the needles gently while they are in place to enhance the treatment effect. The practitioner may use electroacupuncture, which stimulates the needles with a small electric current. The number of sessions will depend on your condition. On average between five and 10 weekly sessions are given in the Pain Management Department.

Is there an alternative treatment?

It is possible that other treatments may be suitable. Do ask your practitioner if you wish to consider this.

Preparations for your treatments

- Be prepared to undress if necessary.
- Do not come to your treatment hungry or after a heavy meal – have a light snack a little while before your session. Acupuncture can lower blood sugar level and make you feel a bit faint if you are hungry.
- If possible bring someone with you to drive you home after your first session – acupuncture can make you feel drowsy; if so, you should not drive.
- Avoid strenuous activity for the rest of that day.
- Do not consume any alcohol or take tranquillisers during the day before your treatment, as this may impair your senses.

Please tell your practitioner if you:

- have any blood clotting problems
- have any history of steroid use
- are pregnant
- have epilepsy
- are a diabetic
- have a metal allergy
- have a needle phobia
- have any heart or blood pressure problems
- have (or recently had) any infections
- suffer from fainting
- have any impaired sensation i.e. numbness or tingling
- are a blood donor.

What if I have more questions?

The practitioner will ask you if you have any questions on the day of your acupuncture. You should ask about anything you are unsure of at this time



If you need an interpreter or a person to sign, please let us know.

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