

Acupuncture - Patient Information 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.

Why would I need this procedure?

Acupuncture can provide pain relief and your Physiotherapist may feel that this type of treatment will help your condition alongside other physiotherapy treatments.

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

Acupuncture when used by physiotherapists can help to manage:

- Pain.
- Muscle spasm

What are the alternatives?

Alternatives to Acupuncture include traditional medical pain relief such as the use of:

- Painkillers.
- Injections

Acupuncture usually supplements other treatments in physiotherapy such as:

- Hands on soft tissue therapy such as massage, mobilisation or manipulation.
- Electrotherapy such as Therapeutic Ultrasound or TENS Machines.
- Exercise therapy

What are the potential risks and side effects?

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

You need to be aware that:-

- Existing symptoms can worsen following treatment (less than 3% of patients). You should tell your Physiotherapist about this, but it is usually a good sign.
- Drowsiness may occur following treatment in a small percentage of patients. If you are affected, you are advised not to drive or operate machinery until this has subsided.
- Minor bleeding or bruising may occur following acupuncture, in about 3% of treatments.

Some medical conditions can affect Acupuncture. Please tell your Physiotherapist if you have any of the following so that they may be considered:

- A skin infection
- Allergy to metal
- Pregnancy
- Diabetes
- Pacemaker or other electric implants
- Anti-coagulant medication
- Epilepsy
- Fear of needles
- Tendency to faint
- Any condition that makes it difficult for you to keep still

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.

What should I do before I come into hospital?

- Please make sure you have eaten within 4 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.

Where will the procedure take place?

At your local physiotherapy department or within a community setting where you are having your physiotherapy.

Will I have an anaesthetic?

No

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.

How long will the treatment last?

Your treatment sessions **could last up to 30 minutes**. This may vary in the community or home setting. The frequency will vary depending on your condition. Please discuss this with your Physiotherapist as it may vary throughout your treatment course.

Consent

Your consent to treatment is essential and can be withdrawn at any time. Please ask your physiotherapist if you need any additional information to support your decision to proceed with treatment.

Please discuss any aspects of your consent with your Physiotherapist. If have any further questions or would like to get in touch, please contact the MSK Physiotherapy department on 0300 131 4770 or email Esht.mskphysiohelp@nhs.net

Sources of information

You can gain more information from, www.csp.org.uk and www.aacp.uk.com
Alternative resources

- An Introduction to Western Medical Acupuncture 2nd edition 2018 by by Adrian White, Mike Cummings & Jacqueline Filshie
- Basics of Acupuncture 5th edition by Gabriel Stux, Brian Berman & Bruce Pomeranz

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only. Further detail of your Acupuncture treatment will be discussed in more details with your physiotherapist.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4500 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

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The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

- The MSK Acupuncture Group
- Team Leads at all MSK outpatients Sites in ESHT NHS Trust

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