Physiotherapy Department

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is offered as one component of a comprehensive physiotherapy programme and is not routinely recommended for all conditions.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of therapy in which fine needles are inserted into specific points in the body to produce a therapeutic effect.

Acupuncture may help reduce pain and improve function for some people. The benefits can vary between individuals and conditions. Acupuncture is used within many NHS physiotherapy services as part of a wider treatment programme. Although it does not work for everybody or every condition, good results are often achieved.

The acupuncture provided by physiotherapists is based on contemporary Western medical principles and is used alongside other physiotherapy treatments.

How does acupuncture work?

Researchers believe acupuncture may stimulate the nervous system and cause the release of naturally occurring chemicals, including endorphins and other neurotransmitters. These chemicals may help reduce pain and influence the way pain signals are processed by the brain and spinal cord.

A reduction in pain can in turn lead to improved movement and function. Acupuncture may also help reduce muscle tension and relieve tenderness in specific areas of muscles.

Acupuncture is not given as a stand-alone treatment. You will be expected to participate in the active rehabilitation programme prescribed by your physiotherapist to achieve the greatest benefit from treatment.

What should I expect?

At your first appointment, your physiotherapist will explain the treatment, answer any questions you may have and discuss whether acupuncture is suitable for you.

What does it feel like?

A brief sharp sensation is usually felt as the needle penetrates the skin. This may be followed by a mild, heavy or dull aching sensation. Everyone experiences acupuncture differently.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable or no longer wish to continue, treatment can be stopped.

compassionate care

How long will the needles be in place?

The needles will usually remain in place for between 10 and 20 minutes.

Where will the needles be placed?

Several needles may be inserted in and around the painful area, as well as at other sites away from the painful area. In some cases, needles may be placed on the opposite side of the body.
Research suggests that these approaches can still be effective for pain relief.

How many treatments will I have?

Most people receive between 4 and 6 treatments over several weeks. If your symptoms have not improved after three sessions, it is unlikely that you will benefit from continued acupuncture treatment. Your physiotherapist will discuss alternative treatment options with you.

Needle stimulation

Once the needles are in place, your physiotherapist may gently stimulate them by rotating them at intervals during treatment.
The aim is to maintain the characteristic heavy or aching sensation often associated with acupuncture, which may contribute to its therapeutic effects.

Is acupuncture safe?

Acupuncture is generally considered to be a very safe treatment when performed by appropriately trained healthcare professionals.

Single-use, sterile, disposable needles are used within this department. All physiotherapists practising acupuncture have completed additional accredited training and are required to maintain their competency through regular professional updating.

Possible side effects and risks

Most side effects are mild and short-lived.

Common side effects

- Minor bleeding or bruising at the needle site
- Mild pain or discomfort at the needle site
- Temporary drowsiness or tiredness
- Dizziness or feeling light-headed
- Temporary worsening of symptoms before improvement

Less common side effects

- Feeling faint
- Nausea
- Headache
- Pain away from the needle site
- Bent or difficult-to-remove needle

Rare side effects

- Infection
- Allergic reaction

Extremely rare but serious side effects

- Pneumothorax (collapsed lung)

Your physiotherapist will discuss any relevant risks with you and advise whether any of your medical conditions may increase your risk of complications.

When might acupuncture not be appropriate for you?

Please tell your physiotherapist if any of the following apply to you:

- Pregnancy or if you think you may be pregnant.
- Unstable heart conditions, heart valve disease or a pacemaker.
- Recent stroke.
- Unstable blood pressure.
- Poorly controlled diabetes.
- Poorly controlled epilepsy or unexplained seizures.
- Bleeding disorders.
- Medications that affect blood clotting, such as warfarin, apixaban, rivaroxaban, dabigatran, edoxaban or clopidogrel.
- Cancer, previous cancer treatment, or concerns relating to cancer affecting the area to be treated.
- Previous lymph node removal or lymphoedema in the area to be treated.
- Poor circulation, reduced sensation, infection, swelling, bruising, fragile skin, psoriasis or other significant skin conditions in the area to be treated.

Your physiotherapist will discuss these factors with you and determine whether acupuncture is suitable and safe for your individual circumstances.

How should I prepare for my acupuncture treatment?

- Read this information leaflet carefully.
- Discuss any questions or concerns with your physiotherapist before treatment.
- Wear or bring suitable clothing that allows access to the area being treated. For example, shorts may be helpful if your problem affects your leg, hip or lower back.
- If you have long hair, please bring something to tie it back if required.
- Have something to eat within two hours of your appointment. Attending on an empty stomach may increase the risk of feeling faint or unwell after treatment.
- If you have diabetes, please ensure you have eaten appropriately and managed your blood sugar levels before attending.

After acupuncture treatment

Following treatment, you may experience:

- Mild aching or heaviness in the treated area.
- Temporary tiredness or drowsiness.
- Minor bruising or slight bleeding at needle sites.

These effects are usually short-lived and settle within 24 to 48 hours.

It is generally safe to continue your normal daily activities; however, you may wish to avoid strenuous activity immediately after treatment if you feel tired.

Please seek medical advice if you experience:

- Severe or worsening pain.
- Significant swelling or redness.
- Signs of infection.
- Shortness of breath.
- Any symptoms that cause concern.

Consent

Your physiotherapist will discuss the treatment with you, answer any questions and obtain informed consent before treatment takes place.

Web Address

http://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/

QR Code

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Physiotherapy Department
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary
Telephone: 01484 342434

MSK Physiotherapy Admin Office
Telephone: 01484 905380

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ,
ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں.

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"