

Further information:

British Medical Acupuncture Society
www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists
www.aacp.uk.com

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

[Twitter.com/WhitHealth](https://twitter.com/WhitHealth)
[Facebook.com/WhittingtonHealth](https://facebook.com/WhittingtonHealth)

Whittington Health NHS Trust
Magdala Avenue
London
N19 5NF
Phone: 020 7272 3070
www.whittington.nhs.uk

Date published: 19/04/2022
Review date: 19/04/2024
Ref: ACS/MSK/Acup/01

© Whittington Health
Please recycle



Acupuncture

A patient's guide

More information

Contact our physiotherapy
service on
Tel: 020 7288 5660

Further advice can be
found on our website:
www.whittington.nhs.uk/msk



What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of therapy involving the insertion of fine needles into specific areas. Research has shown that the insertion of an acupuncture needle into the skin can stimulate the brain to produce natural pain-relieving chemicals, called endorphins. Acupuncture treatment has also been shown to stimulate the release of other natural chemicals by the brain and body, including mood elevators, serotonin and melatonin which helps regulate sleep. It can also be used to promote healing, as after treatment, there can be an increase in blood flow to both muscles and skin. Acupuncture derived originally from Traditional Chinese Medicine theory involving the idea that a “life force” or “Qi” flows through the body.

Will acupuncture work for me?

Clinical trials provide evidence that it has a powerful effect on musculoskeletal pain. It is now commonly used within General Practice, Physiotherapy Departments and Pain Clinics as a complement to conventional medicine. However, acupuncture does not work for everyone or for every condition, but good results are frequently achieved.

Why do Physiotherapists use acupuncture?

Physiotherapists are in a unique position to combine acupuncture with other types of physiotherapy treatment methods, such as exercise, manual therapy, soft tissue techniques, relaxation and advice.

Is acupuncture safe?

Only single-use sterile needles are used. The physiotherapists undertake their responsibility to ensure safe hygienic insertion and subsequent disposal of the needles. In addition to their formal professional training, the physiotherapists at Whittington Health have undertaken intensive acupuncture postgraduate training courses and a programme of continual professional development in order to maintain their clinical standards.

You will be asked to complete a brief consent form prior to receiving acupuncture treatment which explains the procedure involved. It also asks specific questions about your past medical history relevant to whether acupuncture is suitable for you or not. It is advisable to eat at least 2 hours before receiving acupuncture and not to attend if you are suffering from a severe cold or flu.

What to expect?

Following a full physiotherapy assessment, an agreed treatment plan will be formulated; this may involve acupuncture combined with a range of other treatment techniques. You may be asked to sit or lay down and the needles will be inserted into the specific points which relate to your condition. Some points may be local to the problem, others may be a bit further away within your hands and feet or even in the opposite limb. The duration of the treatment may be up to 30 or 40 minutes depending on how reactive you are to acupuncture. Your first acupuncture session will normally be shorter to gauge whether you are suitable for a course of acupuncture.

The most common question is “will it hurt”? When the needle is inserted, it should give rise to mild discomfort and not to pain. Patients often report an aching sensation referred to, in Traditional Chinese Medicine, as “De Qi”, thought to indicate it is working.