
Introduction

This leaflet has been produced to provide you with information about acupuncture and what the treatment will involve.

What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture has been used in China for thousands of years. Since the 1970s it has gained recognition in western medicine. In more recent years it has been utilised within physiotherapy departments.

Its concept involves using fine needles which are inserted at various sites around the body. The Chinese believe that by needling these sites we can influence and benefit health.

Physiotherapists use acupuncture to relieve pain.

How does it work?

Acupuncture stimulates the body to produce naturally occurring pain killers known as endorphins. Needles inserted in regions of the body carry messages via nerves to the brain. The brain responds by producing endorphins. These endorphins reduce nerve sensitivity which can cause local pain and tenderness. In this way acupuncture can reduce pain.

Will it work for me?

Research shows that acupuncture can relieve pain. However like other forms of treatment it does not work for everyone. Each individual will respond in a different way and at a different rate. Your physiotherapist will assess your individual needs and select treatment that is appropriate for you.

Acupuncture can have a cumulative effect, with pain relief often increasing as treatment progresses. Your physiotherapist will monitor your progress at each treatment session.

The needles may remain in place for 5-30 minutes.

Once the needles have been removed you will be able to leave the department. If you feel unwell for any reason you should inform your physiotherapist straight away. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are feeling well enough to drive before you leave the department.

You should review your symptoms over a 48 hour period. Your pain may remain the same, improve or feel temporarily more sore. These can be normal responses to treatment.

Is it safe?

Health Board Physiotherapists who practice acupuncture have all successfully completed an approved acupuncture course. They are bound by strict codes of practice which ensure that treatment is safe, sterile and hygienic at all times.

All acupuncture needles are single use disposable needles. We do not re-use or re-sterilise any needles.

Precautions

It is important that:

- You give an accurate account of your medical history
- You inform us of any medication you are taking. Some drugs can thin the blood and acupuncture is used with caution.
- You inform us if you think or know you are pregnant.
- You have something to eat prior to treatment, a snack is sufficient. If you are hungry you may experience light headedness or fainting.

All information you give is kept in confidence.

Side Effects/Complications

Acupuncture is generally a very safe procedure. Some side effects may occasionally be experienced during or after treatment. These should always be reported to your physiotherapist and may include.

- Fatigue
- Light headedness/fainting
- Bruising or local bleeding
- Temporary local soreness
- Allergy to the needle

On very **rare** occasions the following complications may arise:

- Infection
- Bent/stuck needles
- Pneumothorax (lung collapse)

Please ask your Physiotherapist if you have any questions or concerns

“This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”