

# Acupuncture with physiotherapy

## Information for patients

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### What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is believed to have started in China over 3000 years ago. When you have acupuncture, fine needles are put into your skin at specific points.

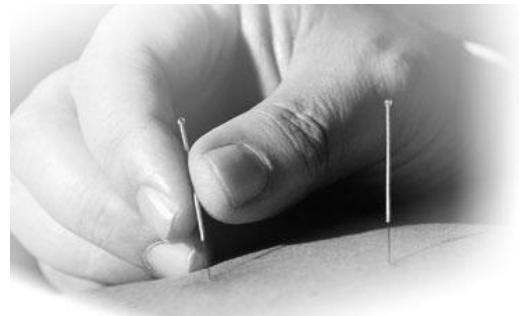
Traditional acupuncture believes that energy called 'Chi' flows in the body. It is thought that if the Chi does not flow well you may have health problems as a result. Acupuncture can be used to re-balance the flow of Chi - to restore and maintain health.

In western medicine evidence shows that acupuncture can help relieve pain. It works by causing your body to release its own pain-relieving and anti-inflammatory chemicals (e.g. endorphins, serotonin and cortisol).



### Is acupuncture safe?

- ✓ Yes, acupuncture is safe for most people
- ✓ Some health problems mean that acupuncture is not advisable. You will be asked questions about your health to check that acupuncture is safe for you
- ✓ If you have any risk factors they will be discussed with you
- ✓ The needles are thin, sterile and are used only once
- ✓ You should eat something in the two hours before having acupuncture, otherwise you may feel faint
- ✓ You can still give blood.



### Do the needles hurt?

- It may be slightly uncomfortable when the needles first go in
- It should not be painful
- Some people may feel a dull, warm, ache. This is a good sign
- The needles may be put in place for only a few seconds, or they may be left in for up to 20 -30 minutes.

Your physiotherapist will discuss with you how many sessions you may need.

## Does acupuncture have side effects?

Side-effects are rare. Some people may get these symptoms:

1. Minor bleeding or bruising where the needles were. This should fade within a few days
2. Slight increase in pain over the first 24 hours after your first few treatments. This should settle
3. Feel drowsy, light-headed or sick. This can happen as acupuncture may lower your blood pressure and blood sugar levels. For this reason, we strongly advise you to eat in the two hours before your treatment
4. If you do feel tired after treatment you should rest. It may not be safe for you to drive straight away.



## Acupuncture in physiotherapy

In NHS Lothian Physiotherapy Services, acupuncture is used to support other physiotherapy treatments (e.g. exercises).

Please be aware that NHS Lothian Physiotherapy Services cannot provide on-going acupuncture for long-term conditions.

**If you have further questions or concerns – please discuss them with your physiotherapist**

## Other information sources

[www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

This leaflet was compiled by the Lothian Physiotherapy Acupuncture Clinical Network in association with the Patient Information Leaflet Group, NHS Lothian Physiotherapy Services.

This leaflet should only be used by specific individuals following physiotherapy assessment. If you have any concerns, please contact your physiotherapist.

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