

Information for patients and carers

Self-Acupuncture

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is one of the oldest forms of Chinese medicine which has been used for over 3000 years. At Lancashire Teaching Hospitals our nurses are qualified in western medical acupuncture. Western medical acupuncture has been adapted from the Chinese practice and is a therapy which involves the insertion of fine needles into the skin at certain body points using the principles of evidence-based medicine. Modern science has shown that acupuncture can help stimulate the brain to produce the body's own natural pain-relieving chemical, known as Endorphins. Endorphins assist the body to heal and provide pain relief.

Why Self-Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a useful tool to help with managing pain, however most people find it helpful if they can have it regularly. Teaching you or a significant other, self-acupuncture is helpful as it allows our patients to access acupuncture as a complimentary therapy more regularly. Our Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS), who are trained acupuncturists, do this by teaching a patient how to perform self-acupuncture over a 5-week course.

The benefits of Self-Acupuncture

Patients report that being able to self-acupuncture in their own home helps them to relax and sleep better, which in turn helps them manage their pain.

How effective is Self-Acupuncture?

Like most persistent pain treatments self-acupuncture does not help everyone, however our most recent audit results showed 95% of patients had an improvement in their pain scores & felt the acupuncture had been beneficial. Reducing the intensity of pain, improve quality of sleep and

mood. Self-acupuncture is not a “cure” however it could help to reduce some of your painful symptoms.

Who will deliver my treatment?

When you attend your hospital appointment for your acupuncture trial the treatment will be undertaken by our Clinical Nurse Specialist and trained acupuncturists by the British Academy of Western Medical Acupuncture.

What does it involve?

You will have to attend the hospital for a series of 5 appointments quite close together these consist of:

- An assessment with an Acupuncturist (CNS) to check you are appropriate to undertake the self-acupuncture course this combined with your first acupuncture session
- 3 x 45 minutes trial appointments (usually once a week for 3 weeks. It can sometimes take several treatments to produce a noticeable benefit
- The needles are sterile, single use and disposable, and inserted using strict hygiene practice
- If you find the acupuncture helpful, you will be invited to attend a 90 minute where you will be taught to undertake acupuncture on yourself, or you can bring a family member or friend who can be taught how to undertake the treatment for you
- 4 weeks after your tuition appointment we will then arrange to speak to you again in clinic via a telephone appointment to discuss your progress

Before and after you attend your appointment advise for patients

- Please eat a light meal or snack prior to your acupuncture appointment. This helps to regulate your body's blood sugars, which can be affected indirectly by acupuncture
- Please shower or bathe prior to appointment to minimise infections
- Please attend your first appointment with family/friend or carer as you may not be fit to drive after having your treatment
- Please avoid taking stimulants such as caffeine and alcohol on the of the day of their appointment. Acupuncture works on your nervous system please avoid having caffeine or alcohol for approximately two hours before and after treatment
- Ensure you are well hydrated as this can enhance the effects of treatment and continue to drink plenty of water throughout the day following your appointment

Who cannot have acupuncture?

- If you are or could be pregnant you will not be able to have acupuncture
- If you have unstable diabetes or epilepsy
- If you have a condition that may cause you severe anxiety or confusion
- If you have or develop clotting disorder or neutropenia
- If you are under the age of 16

Frequently asked questions

1. **How many needles will be used and where will I put the needles?**

We will teach you 5-7 needle points. One in the top of the head, one in each hand, one in each foot and one in each lower leg.

2. How often can I perform acupuncture at home?

We recommend no more than 3 times a week for 20 to 30 minutes.

How will placing needles into these points help with my pain?

The acupuncture points we use and teach have been chosen for a few reasons:

- They all help pain anywhere in the body
- They help you to relax, have a calming effect on your body and help with sleep
- They are safe for you to needles yourself

Will I need to buy the needles?

If you decide to proceed with the self-acupuncture tuition, you will be provided with a box of a 100 acupunctures needles and a sharps box. We will also provide information on where to purchase further needles from.

How much do they cost?

A box of 100 acupuncture needles will last for 15-20 treatments and cost between £7-£10 dependant on the needles you chose.

How long will I have to wait to start the course?

The Self-Acupuncture course is very popular, so unfortunately this may mean having to join a wait list.

Potential side effects of acupuncture

- Drowsiness may occur after treatment in a small number of patients, if this occurs you may need to stay in the department for a short while to recover and advised not to drive home immediately after treatment
- Minor bleeding and bruising may occur in 3% of patients after acupuncture treatment
- There is a rare risk that the needle may break
- Pain during treatment may occur in 1% of patients
- Infection is a potential complication
- Fainting can occur in certain patients, particularly at the time of the first treatment
- Existing symptoms may get worse after treatment (in less than 3% of patients). You are to be assessed for this before your next session, it is usually a positive indication.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Pain Management department at **01772 522183**.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

www.painconcern.org.uk

www.livewellwithpain.co.uk/

www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

<https://www.bawma.co.uk/>

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

patientexperienceandinvovem@LTHTR.nhs.uk

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Division: Diagnostic and Clinical Support

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