

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 was developed by the Chinese over 3000 years ago and involves the introduction of very fine needles through the skin. We do not know exactly how it works, but one explanation is that it possibly causes the nervous system to release 'Endorphins' which are the body's natural painkillers.

Why self-acupuncture?

Acupuncture can be a useful tool to help with pain management, however most people find it more helpful if they are able to have it regularly. Unfortunately, the pain clinic does not have the resources available to be able to offer acupuncture, due to the increasing number of patients referred for it.

Self-acupuncture is an alternative which ensures that acupuncture remains an available treatment option for our patients and can be taught as a short course by our specially trained nurses. A significant number of patients have found that self-acupuncture has improved their symptoms.

The benefits of self-acupuncture

You avoid the stress of having to attend the hospital for treatment. You are in charge! Many of our patients find that being able to undertake a treatment that is accessible to them when they need it, rather than when someone else says they can have it, is very beneficial. Patients tell us that being able to perform the treatment in the comfort of their own home and at a time suitable for them is very worthwhile.

How effective is it?

Like most chronic pain treatments, self-acupuncture does not help everyone, however a recent audit of the service showed that most patients found self-acupuncture helpful with approximately 73% of patients deriving some benefit.

Who will do my treatment?

When you attend hospital for your acupuncture trial your treatment will be undertaken by one of our Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS).

What does it involve?

You will have to attend the hospital for a series of seven appointments quite close together. These consist of:

- An assessment with the Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) to check you are appropriate to undertake self-acupuncture and to answer any questions you may have
- 4 x 30-minute trial appointments (usually once a week for 4 weeks) where a CNS will give you acupuncture. At the end of this 4-week trial, you decide whether the acupuncture has helped and eased some of your symptoms
- If the acupuncture has helped; you will be invited to attend a 90-minute appointment where you will be taught to undertake acupuncture on yourself or, you can bring a member of your family who can be taught how to undertake the treatment for you

- Following your self-acupuncture tuition, you will then have a telephone follow-up appointment with the CNS to discuss your progress

Frequently asked questions

How many needles will be used and where do I put the needles?

We teach you to use just 5 needles - one in the top of your head, one in each hand and usually one in each foot (although for some pains we use an alternative location in the lower leg).

How will sticking needles into these points help my pain?

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

- They all help pain anywhere in the body
- They help you to relax and have a calming effect on the body
- They are safe for you to needle yourself

Will it take all my pain away?

This is unlikely; however, a significant number of our patients find that the acupuncture does improve their symptoms and is very relaxing. It will not “cure” you, but it could help to reduce some of your symptoms.

Do I have to buy the needles?

If you decide to proceed with the self-acupuncture tuition you will be provided with a sharps bin and a box of 100 needles. However you will have to buy any further supplies and we can provide you with information on how/where to purchase the needles and sharps bins.

How much do they cost?

A box of 100 acupuncture needles which will last for twenty treatments costs £6 - £11 dependant on the needles you choose – we give you two choices. A sharps bin which will last for approximately 12 months costs approximately £4.

How long will I have to wait?

The self-acupuncture service is very popular and unfortunately this means the waiting list may be quite long.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact the Pain Management Service on **01772 522687**.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.painconcern.org.uk

www.retrainpain.org

www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk/

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/our-services?service=49

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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.**

Department: Pain Management Service
Division: Diagnostics and Clinical Support
Production date: June 2024
Review date: June 2027
JR 1169 v1