

Acupuncture

Information for patients, carers
and healthcare staff

Ashgate Hospice provides specialist palliative care (treatments to relieve rather than cure an illness) to people with life-limiting illnesses in North Derbyshire. We aim to maintain the best quality of life for patients throughout their illness and to support their family and carers.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of therapy in which fine needles are inserted into specific points on the body.

How does it work?

Acupuncture is used to treat many things including pain, muscle tension or many other problems. There are many pieces of research looking into exactly how acupuncture achieves its effects.

It is thought the effect it gives is due to stimulation of nerve endings at the acupuncture point. These nerve signals stimulate the brain to release your own natural painkillers or endorphins, allowing you to have pain relief with minimal or no side effects. The effect can last several months.



The Chinese who have been practicing acupuncture for over 3000 years believe the effect of acupuncture is to do with modifying the flow of energy (Qi) circulating around the body to treat various conditions.

Does it work for everybody?

No not everybody who has acupuncture experiences help from it. About 70% of people experience some relief with it. It may take longer to work if you have had the condition for a long time.

Does it hurt?

The needles are very fine, much finer than an injection needle. You may feel a slight scratch as the needles go in, but once in you may feel an ache, tingle or warmth; some people do not feel anything.

Is it safe?

There are few side effects to acupuncture:

- Drowsiness occurs after treatment in a small number of people and if this affects you, you are advised not to drive.
- Minor bleeding or bruising occurs after acupuncture in about 3% of treatments.
- Pain during treatment occurs in about 1% of treatments.
- In a small percentage of patients existing symptoms can get worse after treatment (less than 3% of patients). You should tell your physiotherapist about this, but it is usually a good sign.
- Fainting can occur in certain patients, particularly at the first treatment.

In addition if there are particular risks that apply in your case, your practitioner will discuss them with you.

Serious side effects are very rare, less than 1 in 10,000 treatments.

What happens?

Acupuncture is normally done as a course of treatment.

The number of needles used and the time they stay in may vary and your physiotherapist will discuss this with you. The needles are sterile and are disposed of after one use.

The effect of acupuncture is cumulative, so the effect builds up over a course of treatment, typically a course is six treatments but may be longer if deemed necessary. Sometimes acupuncture is only done once.

Treatment is given either in sitting or lying and some items of clothing may need to be removed.

The needles may not always be put in the immediate area around your pain, for example you may have a needle near your ankle to treat neck pain.

Acupuncture is normally given in conjunction with other treatments, this may include electrotherapy, manual therapy, home exercises, in order to treat all aspects of your problem.

It is advisable that you have eaten something (even a biscuit) in the two hours before you have treatment.

If you are unwell on the day of treatment, ring your physiotherapist to discuss this as it may not be appropriate to have acupuncture that day.

If you decide you do not want to have acupuncture or that you do not want to finish the course that is fine, your physiotherapist will discuss other alternative treatments with you.

The acupuncture service is provided by Ashgate Hospice's Physiotherapy Team who have all completed extensive acupuncture training.



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