

Dry needling

We may also offer you dry needling, which is a technique of inserting acupuncture needles into trigger points (tight sensitive areas in the muscles), to relieve pain and restore movement. Dry needling involves the same sterile techniques as used for acupuncture.

Auricular Acupuncture

We may also offer you auricular acupuncture which is the technique of inserting acupuncture needles into specific points in your ear, to relieve pain and restore movement. Ear needling involves the same sterile techniques as used for acupuncture.

Ear Seeds

Small ear seeds may be used for the prolonged stimulation of specific acupuncture points on your ear. This is non invasive and the tape used to secure them is hypoallergenic.

Is acupuncture safe?

Chartered physiotherapists are fully trained in the management of a wide range of conditions. Physiotherapists using acupuncture are required to train to an internationally recognised minimum standard and are bound by professional codes of conduct through the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) and Health Professionals Council (HPC).

Acupuncture is considered a safe treatment. However, any procedure that involves inserting needles into the body has some potential problems, but these remain minimal. Acupuncture has been known to produce some "side effects" in certain people.

Minor side effects:

- Some needle discomfort
- Drowsiness and sleepiness following treatment
- Bruising at the needle site
- Temporary pain increase
- Fainting
- Feeling faint
- May lower blood sugar levels (ensure you have eaten recently)

Serious side effects (these are very rare)

- Damage to an internal organ from the insertion of a needle
- Infection in the area where the needle was inserted
- Infection from Hepatitis or HIV
- Infection which may infect previously damaged heart valves
- Premature onset of labour, in pregnancy
- Injury to nerve

NHS Buckinghamshire Musculoskeletal Integrated Care Service (MusIC)



[Acupuncture and Physiotherapy
information for patients](#)

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What is Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is one of a number of different types of treatment that your physiotherapist may offer. It is viewed by physiotherapists as complimentary, rather than alternative therapy.

Acupuncture has been used in China for over 2000 years. Traditional belief is that energy flows freely throughout the body via channels. However when there is a problem the energy stagnates. Stimulation by acupuncture at various points helps to restore the healthy flow of energy in the body. Recent science has shown that it stimulates the brain to produce natural pain relieving substances. These give pain relief and help the body to heal itself.

Current research is supporting the effectiveness of acupuncture, particularly in the management of pain, suggesting that it can be effective in the treatment of low back pain, neck pain and knee osteoarthritis. Acupuncture combined with physiotherapy is now widely accepted.

When should it not be used?

There are certain circumstances where acupuncture should not be used:

- If you have a needle phobia
- If you have a known metal allergy, specifically stainless steel
- If you have a known infection in the area to be needled

When should it be used with caution?

You should also inform your physiotherapist if you:

- Have haemophilia or another blood clotting disorder
- You are pregnant or trying to conceive
- Suffer from epilepsy
- Have a deficient/weakened immune system
- Have a cardiac pacemaker
- Are taking anticoagulant (blood thinning) medication
- Have diabetes – it may lower your blood sugar levels
- You have a blood-borne virus

These conditions do not exclude you from having acupuncture but they will influence its application. Your physiotherapist needs to know.

Does acupuncture work?

Yes, but it does not work for all. Success can depend on a number of factors, which include:

- General health
- The severity and duration of the condition
- How the condition has been managed in the past

No two people are the same and it is one of the strengths of acupuncture that we treat people individually to get better results.

If you know someone who has experienced acupuncture you may find it helpful to discuss the process before deciding on treatment.

What does acupuncture involve?

Treatment will consist of the insertion of fine needles. These are pre-sterilised and disposable ensuring strict hygiene practice. The needle insertion will feel like a mild pinprick and should only give temporary discomfort.

Once needles are in place you may feel a mild ache, numbness, warm or heavy sensation at and around the needle. This should not be unpleasant. This is referred to as “De Qi” and is a sign that the body’s inbuilt pain relieving mechanisms are being stimulated. Your physiotherapist may gently stimulate the needle until you experience the De Qi. This may be repeated again throughout the treatment.

Most commonly a treatment will involve the insertion of between 2-16 needles. Needles can be in place for as little as a few seconds or 1-2 minutes. More commonly needles will be in place for between 10-30 minutes.

It is advisable to eat before having acupuncture, and not to attend if you are suffering a severe cold or flu.