

## Patient information

### Specialist Palliative Care Acupuncture Information

#### Therapies Department

**Please read this information carefully and ask your physiotherapist if there is anything that you do not understand.**

#### **What is acupuncture?**

Acupuncture has been a much accepted and practised treatment for thousands of years in China and has been an accepted part of physiotherapy treatment in the UK since 1982. Through clinical research Western medicine has evidence to show it can be effective for managing patient symptoms.

Acupuncture involves the insertion of fine needles into specific points on the body. These acupuncture points lie on invisible channels called Meridians. Fine, single-use, sterile, disposable needles are used.

#### **How does acupuncture work?**

Acupuncture is a treatment which can relieve some physical and psychological conditions and potentially helps us manage patient's symptoms. Acupuncture stimulates the nerves in the skin and muscle and can produce a variety of effects.

Research has shown that acupuncture stimulates the brain to release the body's own natural painkillers known as endorphins. It can also promote a sense of wellbeing with the release of serotonin (a natural anti-depressant) and assist with relaxation and sleep.

"Acupuncture can affect most of the body's systems, including the nervous system, muscle tone, hormone outputs, circulation and antibody production as well as the respiratory, digestive, and urinary systems".

(British Medical Acupuncture Society)

#### **What conditions benefit from acupuncture?**

**At Woodlands Hospice we may use acupuncture to treat:**

- Pain
- Breathlessness
- Nausea & vomiting
- Dry Mouth

- Hot flushes and night sweats.
- Low mood, anxiety or poor sleep.
- Peripheral Neuropathy.

One treatment will last for approximately 30 minutes. A course of treatment may be one-two or up to six treatments depending on the response of the patient which is variable. Some patients will feel immediate relief of symptoms but some will see a gradual improvement. Some patients will get no relief.

### **Is acupuncture safe?**

Acupuncture is generally very safe. Serious side effects are rare (less than one per 10,000 treatments). Acupuncture treatment at Woodlands Hospice is practised by Chartered Physiotherapists who have been trained in the technique.

### **Assessment for acupuncture**

Your physiotherapist will make a thorough assessment of your condition and your specific symptoms and decide whether acupuncture is an appropriate treatment for you. You will be asked to give some medical details which is necessary to rule out any contraindications to treatment. You will then be asked to sign a consent form.

### **Does acupuncture have side effects?**

#### **You need to be aware that:**

- Drowsiness occurs after treatment in a small number of patients. You may be advised not to drive.
- Minor bleeding or bruising after acupuncture occurs in about Three % of treatments.
- Pain during acupuncture occurs in about One % of treatments.
- Symptoms may worsen for a day or two after treatment in less than 3% of patients. This is usually a good sign but you should tell your physiotherapist if this happens so your treatment can be modified.
- Some patients may feel faint or nauseous especially during the first treatment. In addition, if there are any specific risks that apply in your case, your physiotherapist will discuss these with you.

### **What you may feel**

- Acupuncture should not be painful.
- Some patients report experiencing an initial scratch or pinprick sensation as the needle is inserted.
- When the needles are in place you may feel a mild ache, numbness, warmth or heavy sensation known as “De Qi”. This is a sign that the body’s pain-relieving mechanisms are being activated.
- You may feel light headed, drowsy, relaxed or ‘high’ after your treatment. If this occurs, you should not consider driving until this feeling subsides.

**Please contact your physiotherapist if you have any problems following your acupuncture treatment.**

## **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## **Further information**

**If you need any further information please telephone  
IMPACT 0300 100 1002**

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**Integrated  
Specialist  
Palliative Care  
Services**



**IMPACT**  
Integrated Mersey Palliative Care Team

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