

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

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# Course of acupuncture at Mansfield Community Hospital

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Following your assessment with a physiotherapist, a course of acupuncture has been recommended as a treatment option. The frequency and duration of each treatment and the course of acupuncture will be discussed and agreed with you prior to starting the treatment.

On completion of these sessions you may be offered further top-up sessions, undertaken at an interval between four and six weeks, if your initial treatment has been beneficial. Each treatment session lasts approximately thirty minutes and will be carried out by a physiotherapist trained to the Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (AACP) standards.

### **What is acupuncture?**

Acupuncture was initially developed in the Far East over two thousand years ago. Adopted largely by Chinese culture, it is believed that the body has 12 channels (meridians), which contain life force or energy known as Chi.

When a person is in good health, the positive and negative forces (yin and yang) are balanced, but they become unbalanced in pain and disease.

Chinese acupuncture belief is that placing needles in specific points along the channels can restore this balance.

Acupuncture became more accepted by Western society in the 1970s, since which time theories of how acupuncture works and treatment techniques have evolved.

Although there is little scientific evidence of how acupuncture really works, Western academic theory is based upon what is understood about our body's ability to control pain, and that the placing of acupuncture needles in specific points increases the production of pain relieving hormones (endorphins). It is also believed that these needles cause the body to stimulate nerve fibres that stop pain messages reaching the brain.

The placement of needles into tight areas within a muscle can help relax the muscle and lower incidents of muscle spasm.

### **How is the treatment given?**

At your first appointment the physiotherapist will explain the treatment to you and answer any questions that you may have.

During the initial consultation you will be required to complete formal written consent for treatment if you are happy to proceed.

Please inform the physiotherapist if you have had a recent viral infection, are taking warfarin/aspirin, are epileptic, or if you may be pregnant.

The physiotherapist will choose the area for treatment and sterile needles will be inserted into the acupuncture points.

Treatment is almost painless, but you may experience some dull aching or heat around the needle sites. The needles are left in place for 20-30 minutes, so it is important that you are positioned comfortably during this period to enable relaxation.

Once the treatment is complete the needles are disposed of and destroyed.

### **What are the benefits?**

Acupuncture can have many benefits. It is not a cure, but is a treatment that can help relieve pain leading to an increase in general mobility. Patients additionally report an improved sense of well being.

The effect of acupuncture differs for each patient and does not necessarily help everyone with the same pain.

The physiotherapist may choose (with your agreement) to stimulate the needles later on in the course if you are receiving little or no benefit to the treatment.

You may get pain relief following this treatment for a number of weeks or months depending on its success.

Acupuncture can have a build-up effect of benefit, therefore, patients often feel little benefit at the beginning of the course and more benefit midway on onwards.

Some of the benefits of acupuncture are listed below. Do not worry if these do not apply to you as acupuncture affects everyone differently.

### **Pain relief**

This may happen after one or following three to four treatments. Pain relief can last from days to months.

Continue to take all your medication as normal. However, you may find that you will not need as much pain relief medication following acupuncture. The doctor/nurse will be able to advise you if you are unsure about reducing your pain relief.

### **Relaxation/sleep**

Acupuncture can help you to feel relaxed and you may notice that you can sleep for longer periods and that the quality of your sleep may improve. This will help you cope with your pain more effectively.

### **Possible risks**

Below are the risks/side-effects associated with acupuncture. Again these can be experienced by some patients, but not others:

- A small amount of bleeding when the needle is removed.
- Bruising at the site of the needle
- Dizziness/fainting - this is very rare but can happen during and/or after treatment.

- Sickness – this can occur in a mild form, either during or following treatment (if sickness is severe then the treatment is stopped - your body's reaction to the release of pain relieving hormones causes this).
- Drowsiness – again your brain releasing pain relieving hormones causes this.
- Increase in pain – your pain may feel worse after one treatment. This is not unusual. If your pain is worse after three treatments, the acupuncture will be stopped and you will be given an appointment to see the doctor.
- Itching – this is rare, but a small number of patients report local skin irritation when the needles are removed. This can usually be resolved by taking an anti-histamine tablet at home.

It is important that you attend all your appointments to ensure your treatment is beneficial. If you miss two appointments, you may be discharged; this is because you will not get the build up of effect achieved by attending a course of acupuncture.

**Please contact us on the number below if you cannot attend your appointment as this can be given to another patient. Failure to inform us that you cannot attend could result in your discharge.**

**Contact us**  
 Rehabilitation Suite  
 Telephone: 01623 785122

### **Further sources of information**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

### **Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

<p>Leaflet code: PIL201707-01-CAMCH          Created: July 2017/ Review Date: July 2019</p>
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