What is acupuncture and electro-acupuncture?

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is believed to have started in China over 3000 years ago. When you have acupuncture, fine needles are put into your skin at specific points. Traditional acupuncture believes that energy called ‘Chi’ flows in the body. It is thought that if the Chi does not flow well, you may have health problems as a result. Acupuncture can be used to re balance the flow of Chi – to restore and maintain health.

Acupuncture can help relieve pain and heal your body. It may work by causing your body to release its own pain relieving and anti-inflammatory chemicals (e.g. endorphins and cortisol). There is some research data that supports acupuncture, though more research is still needed.

Is acupuncture safe?

- Yes, acupuncture is safe for most people
- Some health problems mean that acupuncture is not advisable. You will be asked questions about your health to check that acupuncture is safe for you
- If you have any risks, they will be discussed with you
- The needles are thin, sterile and are only used once, then thrown away
- You should eat something in the two hours before having acupuncture otherwise you may feel faint
- You can still give blood

Do the needles hurt?

- It may be slightly uncomfortable when the needles first go in
- It should not be painful
- Some people may feel a dull, warm, ache. This is a good sign
- The needles may be put in place for only a few seconds, or they may be left in (e.g. up to 30 minutes)

Will it make me better?

About 70% of people are helped with acupuncture. It does not help all people and all problems. It is used to support other treatments and advice.

Your acupuncturist will decide how many sessions you need.
Does acupuncture have side effects?

You can take this medicine for as long as you need it. Do not stop taking this medicine without speaking to your doctor. It needs to be reduced gradually.

What are the side effects?

Side effects are rare. Some people may get these symptoms:
- Minor bleeding or bruising where the needles were. This should fade within a few days
- Slight distending sensation in the first few hours after treatment. This will settle
- Feeling drowsy or lightheaded. This can happen as acupuncture may lower your blood pressure and blood sugar levels. For this reason, it may not be safe for you to drive straight away, and we strongly advise you to eat within two hours before your treatment
- If you do feel tired after treatment you should rest

Electro-acupuncture (EA)

Electro-acupuncture is a method of stimulating acupuncture points with electrical micro current attached to the needles. A typical EA treatment lasts about 30 minutes.

Why use EA?

Studies have shown that EA is helpful with chronic pain management as it promotes the release of endogenous neurotransmitters such as beta-endorphin, a natural analgesic.

Do I feel any sensation?

Typically you will feel a mild tingling sensation and/or a mild involuntary muscle twitches. These are normal sensations.

Is it safe?

Yes, it is a safe treatment for most people. However it is not recommended for people with a pacemaker or a history of seizures.

If you have further questions or concerns, please ask your acupuncturist.