

**Traditional Acupuncture:** Utilisation of meridian or extra points based on a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) approach which includes diagnosis and clinical reasoning using various Chinese medicine assessment methods and/or paradigms. TCM is based on the Chinese concept of energy balancing where there are two forces within the body that require balance in order to achieve health and fitness; these forces are commonly referred to as YIN (negative) and YANG (positive). Treatment with Acupuncture is undertaken with the aim of restoring all the body systems to a state of balance (homeostasis). The aim of inserting an acupuncture needle is to influence the flow of QI (pronounced 'chee'), which circulates in channels or meridians within the body. The QI circulates within the deeper organs of the body, but connects to the superficial skin via acupuncture points. In the state of a normal healthy body, a balance exists between these organs. Both the superficial energy in the meridians and the deeper energy in the organs can be influenced by the stimulation of specific acupuncture points. If injury, disease, emotional trauma or infection occurs, the natural flow of QI within the meridians and organs may well be affected and the result is an altered flow, either a slowing or stagnation of QI causing pain and inflammation, or a deficit of QI, which may cause weakness, exhaustion and longer debilitating disease. The stimulation of relevant acupuncture points may free stagnation, reduce excess QI or increase QI to the specific area or organ therefore helping to restore normal QI flow and balance.

### Is Acupuncture safe?

Acupuncture is safe when practised by a Registered Acupuncturist because of the strict hygiene guidelines, training courses and educational updates required to stay on the register.

There are very few adverse events to Acupuncture treatment reported, your Acupuncturist providing the Acupuncture treatment should carefully screen you for potential risks and warn you of any potential adverse events.

The needles are single-use, disposable and pre-sterilised in individual packaging. They are often supplied in guide-tubes for easy insertion, with no risk of anything touching the needle during the process.



Registered Acupuncturists undertake a responsibility to themselves and their patients, to be sure from the outset of their treatment that the principles of safe, hygienic insertion of needles and their subsequent disposal are adhered to. Used needles are disposed off in 'sharp' containers that are destroyed by incineration.



Acupuncture is generally very safe when practised by qualified acupuncturists. Serious side effects are very rare - less than one per 10,000 treatments.

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

You need to be aware that:

- drowsiness occurs after treatment in a small number of patients, and, if affected, 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;
- existing symptoms can get worse after treatment (less than 3% of patients). You should tell your acupuncturist about this, but it is usually a good sign;
- fainting can occur in certain patients, particularly at the first treatment.

In addition, there are particular risks that apply in your case; your acupuncturist will discuss these with you.

Is there anything your practitioner needs to know?

Apart from the usual medical details, it is important that you let your acupuncturist know:

- if you have ever experienced a fit, faint or funny turn;
- if you have a pacemaker or any other electrical implants;
- if you have a bleeding disorder;
- if you are taking anti-coagulants or any other medication;
- if you have damaged heart valves or have any other particular risk of infection (i.e. if you have to have antibiotics to go to the dentist);
- if you are pregnant.

### **Acupuncture over the trunk**

The framework of the trunk is based around the spinal column of 12 vertebra and the rib cage of 12 paired ribs, which are connected by ligaments, muscles, discs and joints. Within the spinal column is the spinal cord, which transmits information via nerves to and from the brain to the rest of the body. Within the rib cage is the heart and lungs, which extend up under the collarbones and as far down as the eighth ribs. The lungs are covered by pleura (like a plastic bag), which extend slightly lower again, down to the 10th ribs.

Specific potential complications of needling over the trunk

Acupuncture over the trunk and the corresponding lung field is a very common treatment performed safely by acupuncturists. However, a remote possibility of damage to the lungs or their pleura exists resulting in a pneumothorax (or collapsed lung). If there is any indication that you may be at risk, your acupuncturist will advise you and offer alternative treatment techniques.