

Patient Information Leaflet

What is Auricular (Ear) Acupuncture?

Ear Acupuncture is based on Acupuncture Theory where a single part (the ear) is used to treat the whole body. It is originally based on ancient Chinese practice of acupuncture (over 4000 years ago) and has been developed in modern Europe. In particular, Dr Paul Nogier, a French neurologist in 1957 evolved the concept that specific parts of the body can be anatomically mapped and projected onto the ear in the form of an inverted foetus. There are over 200 known acupuncture points on the ears.

What is the evidence based to ear acupuncture treatment? Will I benefit?

Ear acupuncture may be used as a stand-alone treatment, or more commonly alongside usual care in conventional treatment. It is thought ear acupuncture works by affecting nerve impulses and the central nervous system (modern Western perspective) or the idea that 'qi' (vital energy) travels around the body along 'meridians' which the acupuncture points affect (ancient Oriental view.) Ear acupuncture seems to have a beneficial effect on the health of some individuals who often report an improved sense of wellbeing, sleep and relaxation. Acupuncture is known to affect most of the body's systems and certain ear acupuncture protocols have an empirical base supporting their effectiveness. Systematic reviews carried out by Cochrane Collaboration have found some evidence for ear acupuncture include:

Pain reduction	Anxiety	Migraine/tension-type headache
Nausea and vomiting	Vaccaria seeds or magnets to ear acupoints have also shown to be effective	
Sham control and placebo control trials have shown ear acupuncture to have positive outcomes.		

What can I expect from a treatment?

The treatment is quick and simple, using very fine single sterile disposal needles. Up to about 5 needles are placed in each ear for about 30-45 minutes whilst you sit and rest. The treatment requires no removal of clothing other than being able to access the ears. The treatment may be conducted on an individual basis or is just as effective in a group setting. It's cost effective (compared with most drug therapy.) It's best to make sure you have eaten before a treatment and participate in a pre-treatment consultation. After your treatment you are advised to minimise stimulating products (such as caffeine) and avoid heavy exercise. You may benefit from a herbal tea or water which your practitioner may offer you.

What information is useful for my practitioner to know?

There are very few contra-indications to receiving auricular acupuncture. However, it is important that you inform your practitioner if you are:

Diabetic
Have ever experienced a fit, faint or funny turn?
Have been fitted with a pacemaker or any other electrical implants?
You have a bleeding disorder
You are taking anticoagulants or any other medication?
You have damaged heart valves or have any other particular risk of infection
You are pregnant or actively trying for a pregnancy
You suffer from metal allergies
You know of any reason why you should not have ear acupuncture?

Will it hurt?

Acupuncture is not often described as a painful treatment. A brief sharp sensation is sometimes felt as the needle penetrates the skin; some points tend to be more sensitive than others. This sensation is unique to each individual.

Is it safe?

MTAT ear acupuncturists are trained to a high standard and observe a code of conduct published by British Acupuncture Council. Anna is also registered with Yuan TMC Ear Acupuncture Register and appears on Federation of Holistic Therapist Complementary Healthcare Therapist Register, which has been approved by the Professional Standards Authority, under its Accredited Registers programme.

Only single use sterile disposable needles meeting EU standards are used during treatment and they are removed and disposed of carefully into a sharps bin. The ear, which is more prone to infection during acupuncture than the body, is cleaned with an antibacterial wipe before treatment. Treatment room facilities, equipment used and hand washing procedure are carried out to be as microbiologically sterile as possible.

Are there any side effects to the treatment?

Ear Acupuncture is considered to be a safe treatment with very few side effects. Serious side effects are very rare - less than 1 per 10,000. On occasion there may be:

Slight bruising or minor bleeding where a needle was inserted.

Drowsiness may occur, if so you are advised not to drive.

Symptoms may occasionally get worse after treatments, inform your GP.

Fainting can occur in certain patients, particularly after the first treatment if you are hungry or overtired.

Nausea or sweating may also occasionally occur. Drinking plenty of water and resting help such symptoms subside.

Any contra-indications to treatment are checked by your practitioner before the treatment commences.

There may be blood donor restrictions after receiving ear acupuncture, although there is no longer the need to provide a blood donor certificate when donating blood, please check with NHS Blood and transplant service.