

# Acupuncture

## What is Western Medical Acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a therapy that has been practised in China and other Eastern countries (Japan, Korea, Vietnam, etc.) for thousands of years. Over time, it has branched into two streams: Eastern acupuncture, which focuses on improving overall wellbeing and Western which aims to treat specific symptoms.

Western medical acupuncture involves the insertion of very fine needles into specific points around the body using current knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology. Acupuncture works by stimulating receptors in your skin, which in turn stimulates your nervous system.

## What are the potential benefits?

Acupuncture is offered to help manage side effects and symptoms of cancer and its treatment, and that of other illnesses. This includes relief from chemotherapy-induced nausea, musculoskeletal pain, radiation burn pain, hot flushes, breathlessness and fatigue.

## What happens during an Acupuncture treatment?

The acupuncturist will take information about your current symptoms, medical history, medication and general wellbeing. Based on the findings of this assessment the therapist will gently insert very thin needles at certain points on your body. The needles are left in place for approximately 30 minutes and may be gently manipulated. You may be asked to remove some clothing to access the necessary acupuncture points.

## How long does a session last, how many will I have, and how often?

Acupuncture sessions last up to 50 minutes. The number of sessions depends on the issue being treated and will be outlined by your acupuncturist during your first session.

## How will I feel afterwards and what should I do?

Acupuncture should cause virtually no pain. However, some people experience sensations such as heaviness, tightness, numbness or light-headedness after a treatment. This is nothing to worry about, but it is advisable not to have too strenuous a day following an acupuncture treatment. You may feel thirstier than usual and it may help to have a glass of water to drink. It is recommended that you avoid alcohol on the day of the treatment.

*Complementary therapies, including acupuncture, should not be regarded as an alternative to medical treatment prescribed by your doctor.*