

Acupuncture aftercare

Patient information

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of therapy in which fine single-use sterile needles are inserted into specific points on the body. Practitioners may also use additional techniques alongside acupuncture such as moxibustion, cupping, massage and electroacupuncture, all of which will be explained by the practitioner before they are introduced.

Is acupuncture safe?

Extensive research has shown that reported adverse events following acupuncture are incredibly rare and that most side effects are mild and pass very quickly. Serious side effects following acupuncture are uncommon, with research showing that on average only 1 in 10,000 treatments results in a significant side effect.

Does acupuncture have side effects?

Mild transient symptoms are noted in around ten per cent of treatments but generally there are few side effects to treatment.

The most common minor symptoms include:

- minor bleeding
- bruising
- mild pain at the site of needling
- aggravation of symptoms often before improvement

In addition, some patients experience other responses including:

- drowsiness, tiredness and feeling relaxed
- fainting during treatment, although this is rare and most likely during the first treatment

Most people feel pleasantly relaxed with no ill effects after treatment.

Is there anything your practitioner needs to know?

Your practitioner will always take a thorough case history before commencing treatment. It is important that they have as much detail as possible about your medical history and any medication you are taking. You should let your practitioner know if you:

- have ever experienced a fit, faint or funny turn
- have a pacemaker, or any other electrical implants
- have a bleeding disorder
- are taking anticoagulants, immune suppressants or any other medication
- have damaged heart valves or any particular risk of infection

What to do if you experience any side effects following acupuncture

If you have any concerns following treatment you should contact your practitioner for further guidance. Your practitioner can deal with the majority of incidents and refer you on if necessary. It is important to make your practitioner aware of any responses you have to treatment; they can then adjust any future treatments and make sure that whatever you are experiencing is not out of the ordinary.

The majority of minor adverse events pass very quickly following treatment, usually within 24 to 48 hours. On occasion symptoms can last a little longer and some have been reported to last for several weeks.

Having spoken to your practitioner, if you still have concerns you should either contact the [safe practice officer](#) at the [British Acupuncture Council](#) on [020 8735 0400](tel:02087350400), or arrange to discuss your symptoms with your GP.