



Information sheet: Acupuncture

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a treatment technique that involves placing very fine filiform needles into muscle points in the body. There are two predominant systems of guiding principles: those from Chinese medicine; and the more recent Western medical acupuncture, which is based on a modern understanding of the mechanisms of the technique. There is little to choose between these approaches in terms of results, but the language and concepts differ. Some patients may like the concepts of Chinese philosophy whereas others may prefer the language of modern medical science.

How do I find a practitioner?

Patients should seek qualified practitioners who are regulated healthcare professionals or who are on an accredited register held by the Professional Standards Authority ([PSA](#)).

Regulated healthcare professions (RHP) using Western medical acupuncture

Physiotherapists	AACP or BMAS
Doctors	BMAS
Nurses	BMAS
Osteopaths	BMAS
Midwives	BMAS
Other RHP	BMAS

Acupuncturists on an accredited register held by the PSA

Chinese medicine practitioners	BAcC
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What does the therapy do?

Acupuncture appears to be very effective in routine care for a number of chronic complaints and is associated with a very minimal risk of serious side effects.

It can have effects on general wellbeing and has a tendency to push a number of systems in the body towards their natural point of balance, sometimes referred to as homeostasis.

How is acupuncture regulated?

Acupuncture may be performed by a healthcare professional who is regulated, eg a doctor using Western medical acupuncture. In this case the regulation is as a doctor rather than as an acupuncturist.

A practitioner may call themselves an acupuncturist, and in this case it is advisable to check that they appear on an accredited register held by the [PSA](#).



Is there an evidence-base

There are over [40 000 research papers](#) on acupuncture listed on [PubMed](#) – the database of the National Library of Medicine in the US. The majority of these have been published in the last 20 years. A summary of the large clinical trials of acupuncture can be found on the BMAS website here: [Clinical evidence for acupuncture](#).