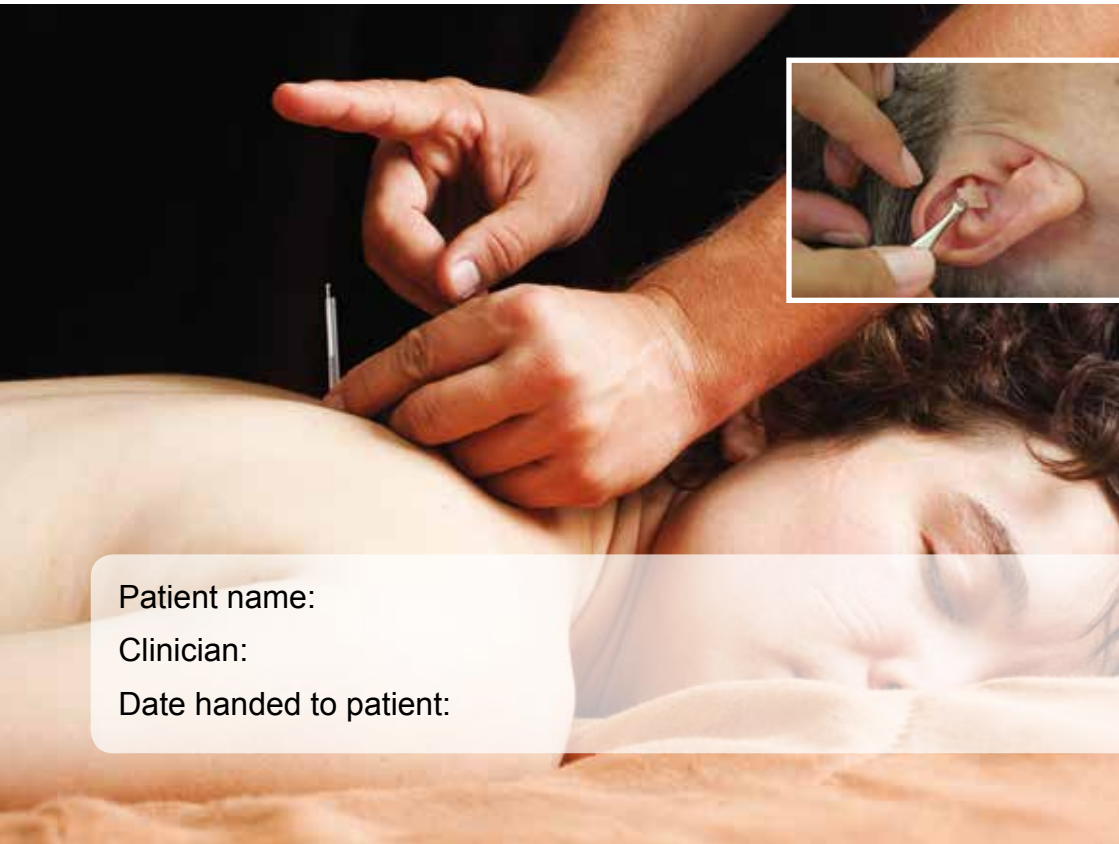


Acupuncture and Auriculotherapy for chronic pain



Patient name:

Clinician:

Date handed to patient:

About this leaflet

This leaflet is to provide information to patients who might benefit from acupuncture or auriculotherapy as part of their chronic pain management plan.

Acupuncture

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is the insertion of fine, sterile, disposable needles into the skin. These are inserted in specific points of the body, which can be either at the site of pain or further away. There is good evidence for the effectiveness of this technique in pain relief. Research suggests that acupuncture can:

1. Slow down pain signals to the brain via the spinal cord and peripheral nervous system.
2. Encourage the body to produce its own pain relieving chemicals (endorphins).

Is acupuncture safe?

Although it is a relatively safe treatment, acupuncture is not without its side-effects.

Minor side-effects

- Discomfort, bleeding and/or bruising at the needle insertion site.
- Drowsiness.
- Feeling faint/fainting.
- Temporary increase in pain.

Rare serious side-effects

- Infection.
- Damage to tissues.

All clinicians have received specialist training and are required to adhere to their professional code of conduct.

When should it not be used?

At your assessment a checklist will be completed to assess your suitability for acupuncture, as a number of exclusions and precautions exist. Please inform your clinician:

- if you have needle phobia
- if you have a known allergy to metal
- if you have ever experienced a fit, faint or funny turn
- if you have a pacemaker or any other electrical implant
- if you have a bleeding disorder, or are taking anticoagulants (blood thinning medication)
- if you have damage to heart valves, previous heart valve replacement surgery or have any particular risk of infection
- if you are pregnant or trying to conceive.

Please feel free to discuss any concerns that you may have with your clinician.

Acupuncture as part of your pain management plan

The Community Chronic Pain team are able to provide a single, short course of acupuncture up to a maximum of 12 sessions. Repeat acupuncture courses are not available. Acupuncture is not provided as a stand-alone therapy, but is utilised to support your care pathway. All patients are encouraged to use long-term self-management strategies, which will make the most of any benefits of acupuncture.

It is essential that any pain reduction gained during this time is used to benefit you in the longer term. We will therefore help you to identify a personal goal at the start of treatment, such as to support a medication reduction or increasing physical activity. The acupuncture treatments will be tailored to help you achieve your goal, and ultimately help you manage your pain in the longer term once the acupuncture has concluded.

What to expect

Your first appointment will be an assessment. Your clinician will ask you a number of questions and help you to identify a goal for treatments; they will also answer any questions that you may have. Appointments may last from 30-45 minutes. Should the decision be made to proceed, an individual plan is then agreed with you.

You may feel a sharp scratch or pinprick as the needles are inserted, followed by a dull, heavy ache. Some patients might experience numbness, tingling or a sensation of warmth in the area being treated. These sensations are normal and are often referred to as “De Qi”.

The needles can be left in for up to 30 minutes, they are sometimes stimulated manually or by using an electro-acupuncture device. The number of needles used varies from person to person and could differ each time that you are treated. Your response to treatment will be re-assessed at each visit and the treatment adjusted accordingly. The number of sessions provided will depend on your individual response, but will not exceed 12.

What you can do

It is advisable to have somebody with you for your first treatment session.

Before attending clinic

- Make sure you have eaten in the last two hours prior to the session.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine immediately before and after treatment.
- Wear loose clothing that can easily be removed.

After attending clinic

- You may need get somebody to drive you home after the session, as you may feel tired after treatment.
- Rest and sleep if possible.
- Do not have a hot bath immediately after treatment.

Auriculotherapy

This section provides information to patients who might benefit from auriculotherapy, to complement their acupuncture treatment, as part of their chronic pain management plan.

What is auriculotherapy?

In traditional Chinese medicine, the ear is seen as a microsystem representing the entire body. Auricular acupuncture focuses on ear points that may help a wide variety of conditions including pain. Acupuncture points on the ear are stimulated with fine needles or with earseeds and massage (acupressure).

How does it work?

Recent research has shown that auriculotherapy stimulates the release of natural endorphins, the body's own feel good chemicals, which may help some patients as part of their chronic pain management plan.

What are earseeds?

Earseeds are traditionally small seeds from the Vaccaria plant, but they can also be made from different types of metal or ceramic. Vaccaria earseeds are held in place over auricular points by a small piece of adhesive tape, or plaster. Applying these small and barely noticeable earseeds between acupuncture treatments allows for patient massage of the auricular points. Earseeds may be left in place for up to a week.

Who can use earseeds?

Earseeds are sometimes used by our Chronic Pain Service to prolong the effects of standard acupuncture treatments and may help some patients to self manage their chronic pain.

How can I get the most out my treatment with earseeds?

It is recommended that the earseeds are massaged two to three times a day or when symptoms occur by applying gentle pressure to the earseeds and massaging in small circles.

Will using earseeds cure my chronic pain?

As with any treatment, earseeds are not a cure but they can reduce pain levels for some patients as part of their chronic pain management programme.

What if the earseeds come off?

There should be no problems with bathing or showering with seeds in place as the plaster provides a waterproof seal. Take care when talking on the phone, using earphones, brushing hair or touching and cleaning your ears. If the plaster seems to be coming off, the edges can be secured with tape, such as micropore, or removed completely and a new earseed applied.

When to remove earseeds?

Earseeds should be changed at least once a week and always checked daily for signs of infection. Remove them immediately if the surrounding area becomes red, sore or inflamed. If seeds are removed, they can be disposed of in your general household waste.

Contact information

If you have any questions about your treatment, please contact your therapist via the Chronic Pain Service.

Phone: 0300 123 1753

Community Chronic Pain, St Augustine's Business Centre
125 Canterbury Road, Westgate-on-Sea, Kent CT8 8NL

Your feedback

We value your feedback on our service. Please feel free to speak to any of our staff or you may prefer to comment in writing to:

Clinical Service Manager

Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust,
Trinity House, 110-120 Upper Pemberton,
Eureka Park, Ashford, Kent TN25 4AZ

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If you have a query about our health services, or would like to comment, compliment or complain about Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, you can contact the **Customer Care Team**.

Phone: 0300 123 1807 lines open 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Please ask if you would like the team to call you back.

Email: kcht.cct@nhs.net

Text: 07899 903499

Address:

Customer Care Team,
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust,
Unit J, Concept Court, Shearway Business Park,
Folkestone, Kent CT19 4RJ

If you need communication support, an interpreter or this information in another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read or large print, please ask a member of staff. You will be asked for your agreement to treatment and, if necessary, your permission to share your personal information.

You can give us feedback about our services at www.kentcht.nhs.uk

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