

Acupuncture is recognised as a complimentary medicine and involves the insertion of fine needles into various points around the body.

To be able to practice acupuncture within the MOD, the practitioner must have undertaken rigorous training and reached a certain standard as set by the Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (AACP) or the British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS).

**This leaflet will explain:**

- What acupuncture does?
- How treatment is done.
- What to expect.
- When acupuncture is not advised.
- What to do after acupuncture treatment.

**What does acupuncture do?**

The aim of acupuncture is to stimulate nerve endings under the skin. This in turn activates the brain to release chemicals which help control pain and improve sleep patterns.

The western approach to acupuncture as used by physiotherapists at HMS Nelson is for use in management of pain. The Eastern Chinese medicine uses the same combination of points for a much wider spectrum of conditions.

**How is treatment done?**

Acupuncture is normally performed in a lying position of comfort where best access to the area to be treated is available. Fine needles are inserted into specific points around the body as determined by the acupuncture practitioner. The points are chosen following an appropriate assessment. The number of needles varies widely and can be anything from one to ten. The needles stay in place for a varying length of time, from a few seconds to 30 minutes.

When the needles are removed they are disposed of and NEVER re-used. Sometimes the needles need to be stimulated and this can be done by agitating them by hand, using electro-acupuncture or with heat.

**What to expect:**

Acupuncture is not normally painful but you are expected to feel a 'sensation'. This is when the C-fibres are being stimulated and the effect of acupuncture is being achieved. The Chinese call this *De Qi*. This sensation is variable from person to person, ranging from tingling to an ache.

Whilst it is not essential to feel *De Qi* for acupuncture to work, the effects are better if *De Qi* is felt.

During and after treatment you may feel sleepy and relaxed. It is also usual to feel invigorated for a while after. Effects usually last up to 1 ½ day with long term pain relief able to be achieved after a course of treatment. A course of treatment usually involves an average of 5 treatments.

Any effects noticed during and after you treatment should be reported to your practitioner.