



British
Acupuncture
Council

Traditional acupuncture is a healthcare system used in the East for over 2,000 years.

Acupuncture adopts an holistic approach to healthcare, considering the mind and body as one, and is based on the idea that a blockage or disturbance in the flow of 'qi' (a concept from Chinese philosophy), can cause health issues.

Traditional Chinese Medical theory views pain and illness as an indication that the body is out of balance. The aim of acupuncture treatment is to stimulate the body's natural healing system and restore health and equilibrium.

Acupuncturists insert very fine needles into specific points throughout the body, along pathways known as 'meridians', to regulate body processes and functions, balance the body energies, stimulate healing, and promote relaxation. Other techniques can include moxibustion and cupping.

Your local BAcC registered acupuncturist will be happy to discuss how acupuncture might be able to help you.



The British Acupuncture Council (BAcC) maintains and promotes the highest standards of professional practice for the acupuncture profession in the UK.

BAcC Members are degree-level trained or above and are listed on the Accredited Register of the Professional Standards Authority (PSA). This offers a quality mark for high standards of training, safe practice and professional conduct. It also means that GPs can refer to a BAcC Member.



accredited register

To find your local BAcC registered acupuncturist, visit our website or ask for a free list by email or phone.

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Acupuncture
for you

Why acupuncture?

Acupuncture is widely used all over the world as a stand-alone treatment or in combination with other forms of medicine. In East Asian countries, it is integral to mainstream healthcare.

Acupuncture with a trained and fully qualified practitioner is one of the safest forms of healthcare you can choose, combining the art of diagnosis with the skill of practice.

Who benefits from acupuncture?

People of all ages can benefit from having acupuncture to help manage a range of health conditions. Sometimes, people choose acupuncture when their body systems feel out of balance, even though they have no obvious symptoms. Some choose to have regular treatment because they find it beneficial and relaxing, especially if they lead a very stressful life. Often, people turn to acupuncture to take back control of their health whilst others want to understand their body in a deeper way, wanting to look after their health, mind and soul.

Is there evidence that acupuncture works?

In the last couple of decades, high quality clinical trials have been conducted and the evidence base for acupuncture is now growing. Most clinical research is concentrated on chronic pain. This has resulted in a large, systematic review* of over 20,000 patients that demonstrates that acupuncture is effective and the results are not purely due to the placebo effect. More details can be found on the BAcC website.

What will happen when I go for acupuncture?

A BAcC acupuncturist will take your medical history, read your pulse, may examine the site of your symptoms, and may look at your tongue. Your individual treatment plan will be based on your current health and lifestyle.

Your acupuncturist will decide which combination of points is right for your whole body, as well as your symptoms. Sometimes acupuncture needles are inserted for just a second or two, or you may be asked to rest for a while

before the needles are removed. If an alternative technique such as moxibustion or cupping is considered, your acupuncturist will explain these to you.

The single-use sterile needles come in sealed packs and all needles are safely disposed of after each treatment. A well-trained acupuncturist will always have a clean clinic, will cleanse their hands frequently and will never needle you through your clothing.

What do acupuncture needles feel like?

Acupuncture needles are so fine that most people don't feel them being inserted. It is normal to feel a mild tingle or dull ache as your acupuncturist adjusts the needle. Many people feel deeply relaxed during the treatment. Those people with an aversion to needles often end up enjoying acupuncture due to its positive effects and relaxing treatments.

How many treatments will I need?

Acupuncturists treat the person, not just the condition which they have, so each patient's treatment plan will be different.

Weekly sessions are quite usual to begin with. Long-term health complaints may require more bi-weekly or maybe monthly ongoing sessions. In lifelong conditions, some patients choose to use acupuncture as an ongoing way to help manage their health and wellbeing. Your BAcC acupuncturist will discuss with you how often you should come for treatment.

Is acupuncture safe?

Acupuncture is safe when performed by a fully trained and qualified professional, and the risk of serious adverse events from acupuncture is extremely low.

Acupuncture in the UK is not regulated by law. Therefore, the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) recommends seeing a professional on an Accredited Register, such as a BAcC Member. This is a quality mark for the highest standards of training, safe practice and professional conduct.

Are there any side effects?

On occasions, a small bruise may appear. Occasionally, people can feel dizzy or tired for a brief time after treatment. These side effects are transitory and will resolve by themselves.

Should I tell my doctor I'm having acupuncture?

If you have been prescribed medication, we recommend you tell your doctor that you plan to have acupuncture with a BAcC registered practitioner. Do not stop taking your medication. You should also tell your acupuncturist about any medication and supplements you are taking. BAcC acupuncturists are trained to recognise potentially serious underlying health conditions and will refer you to your GP if appropriate.

How much does acupuncture cost?

Treatment charges vary around the country and between practitioners and clinics. Talk to your local BAcC practitioner or check their website for prices before booking.

Does the NHS recommend acupuncture?

Acupuncture on the NHS is now recommended by NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) for managing chronic pain as well as migraines and headaches. The Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) also recommends acupuncture for chronic pain, including lower back pain and knee pain.

Under General Medical Council guidelines, GPs may refer patients to practitioners listed on a Professional Standards Authority (PSA) Accredited Register. The BAcC is the accredited register for traditional acupuncture. The PSA recommends that the public only see practitioners on an accredited or statutory register, giving you the confidence you need.

Will my health insurance pay for acupuncture?

Many health policies now cover treatment with BAcC registered acupuncturists, so do check with your insurer.



1. Vickers AJ, Vertosick EA, Lewith G, et al. Acupuncture for Chronic Pain: Update of an Individual Patient Data Meta-Analysis. *J Pain* 2018;19(5):455-74. doi: 10.1016/j.jpain.2017.11.005.