

PATIENT INFORMATION

Acupuncture for Xerostomia (Dry Mouth)

What is it?

Acupuncture has been used in Chinese medicine for over 3,000 years. It involves the stimulation of specific points on the skin, by the insertion of tiny needles, to free the flow of energy (this is called Qi) which it is believed encourages a healthy body state.

Is it safe?

Acupuncture is safe and we use only pre sterilised disposable needles. Acupuncture is widely used and it has been estimated that one million treatments are given on the NHS in England each year. We follow the Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists guidelines for safe practice.

What evidence is there?

There is increasing scientific evidence to support the effectiveness of acupuncture for nausea and vomiting after surgery and chemotherapy. Research has been able to show that acupuncture stimulates the brain to produce natural pain relieving chemicals called endorphins.

Will it hurt?

When inserted the fine needles give a feeling, which should only be temporary, of mild discomfort at the most. Occasionally a more intense sensation is experienced; this is thought to indicate the movement of Qi at the acupuncture point.

Who does it?

Special sessions are usually held on a Friday afternoon in the ENT outpatients department. We ask new patients to attend weekly sessions initially for 4 weeks and then monthly depending on individual needs. Our Associate Specialist in ENT, Mr Shyam Singam.

What happens at the sessions?

We hold group sessions of 5-6 people. We have found this to be a valuable source of support for patients suffering from a similar condition. At the first session Mr Singam will ask about your past medical history and recent treatments received. You will be asked to rate your dryness on a simple 0-10 score and, if you meet our criteria, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Mr Singam will then proceed to clean the skin with an alcohol swab and insert the needles (usually 3 in each ear and 1 in each forefinger). The needles will remain in place for 30 minutes. In total expect to be in the department for approximately 1 hour. Subsequent sessions will be approximately 40 minutes.

Will it work?

Very few medical trials have been carried out on the benefits of acupuncture for patients with a dry mouth. However, the information we do have appears to show an increase in saliva flow after acupuncture for many of our patients.

If you would like to be considered for a trial of acupuncture, we request that you complete a questionnaire and return it at your convenience. An appointment will be sent to you in the post.

Contacts:**Head & Neck Clinical Nurse Specialists**

Tel: ☎ (01803) 655044

British Acupuncture Council Tel: ☎ 020 873 504 00

Website: www.acupuncture.org.uk

The British Medical Acupuncture Society Tel: ☎ 01606 786 782

Website: www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.