

Getting to the point of Acupuncture...

With Acupuncture Awareness week upon us we take a look at its' ever growing popularity and get a first hand account of what acupuncture entails from our guest blogger Rachael Burrows. Rachael, a Marketing Coordinator at Sovereign Health Care, is covered on the company health care cash plan and talks us through her experience. Over to Rachael...

We all at some point in our lives suffer from pain. Be it that niggling twinge in your lower back or that blinding migraine you suffer on your daily commute to work, we'd all like an effective way to deal with pain.

With recent exposure on painkiller dependency many are now looking for more complementary alternatives for pain relief. Acupuncture, a form of Chinese medicine previously thought to be reserved for yoga loving celebrities, is now a popular method of treatment for a host of ailments and conditions.

Treatment involves inserting fine needles into the skin at specific points on the body in the belief that it will stimulate nerves and muscle tissue with a beneficial effect on pain. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) currently recommends acupuncture as a treatment option for lower back pain. However there is also strong evidence to suggest effectiveness with a number of other ailments or conditions including;

- Migraine
- IBS
- Skin conditions (acne, eczema)
- Fertility problems
- Stress
- Insomnia
- Depression

Whilst I'm not currently suffering with any painful ailments, I was particularly interested in the suggested effectiveness of acupuncture on skin conditions. From outbreaks along my jaw line to dry patches on my forehead, my list of skin conditions seemed endless. After a festive season of over indulgence, cold weather and central heating my skin was definitely 'lacklustre'. So with much trepidation I booked in for a session, opting for 'Facial Acupuncture' at a local acupuncture clinic in Rawdon, Leeds. On arrival Caroline, the practitioner, started with a short consultation to discuss my skin concerns and what I hoped to get from the session. Caroline queried all levels of my lifestyle such as my diet and medical history and even inspected my tongue! From this we decided a body acupuncture session would be suitable as skin issues can indicate an imbalance in the whole body not just the face. I closed my eyes and let Caroline begin my transformation into a human pin cushion, with the whole session lasting around 45 minutes. Below are a few questions my friends and family wanted answered on my relaxed yet energized return.

Does it hurt?

No. Acupuncture needles are doweled which means they do not cut the skin as conventional injections would. Caroline inserted around 15 needles in my forehead, ears, stomach, elbows, feet and legs. On each insertion I was asked to breathe in and the only feeling I experienced was a slight tingling just after each needle was inserted which lasted a couple of seconds.

Do you need to 'believe' in the treatment for it to work?

I did query this with Caroline before the session started with her informing me that it's not necessary to 'believe' in the treatment as acupuncture does the work for you. I can honestly say I had zero expectations when I walked into the clinic, after years of buying into miracle skin products I hate to admit I had become a bit of a cynic. Yet there has definitely been an improvement in the both the texture and appearance of my skin and my pores have reduced in size. The improvement wasn't immediate, but within a few days the dry patches on my forehead had reduced and the lumps and bumps along my jaw line had all but disappeared.

How many sessions do you need?

This varies from person to person and depends on the condition or ailment in question. Caroline explained she had treated people who had been looking for pain relief for years and they had gained that within a few sessions whereas others would come back for regular sessions for years.

Is this available on the NHS?

The availability of acupuncture on the NHS is limited so many people opt to pay privately for the treatment. With a health care cash plan from Sovereign Health Care you can claim back 50% of the amount paid by you to a qualified and registered acupuncture practitioner up to your cover level maximum in each claiming year making this form of treatment more affordable.

Would you have it done again?

Yes I would definitely return and have this done again, and have already booked in for another session. Looking around the treatment room I was surrounded by thank you cards from patients, including some moving ones from new parents who had been treated successfully for fertility problems. The initial improvement to my skin is encouraging but the relaxing and energizing feeling I gained throughout the short session was an unexpected bonus. This is something I'd suggest to anyone with any of the ailments listed or even those leading a busy lifestyle and just looking for a way to relax.

With special thanks **to Caroline Haigh at Calverley and Rawdon Acupuncture Clinic, Rawdon, Leeds LS19 6AZ**

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