

## **Acupuncture**

**Acupuncture** is a traditional Chinese medicine treatment where very fine needles are inserted at strategic points around the body. A series of points are joined on the surface of the body by lines called meridians. These lines do not form part of any structure of the body as such. However they are similar muscle trigger points in western medicine.

Acupuncture can reduce pain, reduce muscle spasm and improves general wellbeing.

This is achieved at various levels by:

- Sensory nerve stimulation and blood vessel dilatation.
- Modulation of the autonomic nervous system, (blood flow and visceral function) and modulation of the pain conduction mechanisms in the spinal cord.
- General pain relief by the release of endorphins and other hormones.

Most treatments take place at weekly intervals. Acupuncture is safe when given by specially trained practitioners.

There can be minor complications like pain, local bleeding, and sedation.

Rarely major complication like damage to the outer lining of the heart, damage to pacemakers and infection may occur.

Normally it is safest to use in the middle three months during pregnancy.

Acupuncture is safe when used by trained personnel. Acupuncturists can be medical or non-medical (traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, physiotherapists, pain clinic nurses, osteopaths, and chiropractors), and they all should have been on specially designed courses for their own profession.