

Semi-permanent indwelling needles (studs)

Acupuncture indwelling needles (studs) are used for a variety of conditions to prolong the effects of standard acupuncture treatment. If sited at the top of the chest, the studs are held in place by a small clear plastic adhesive dressing.

How to use studs

The studs will remain in place for a period of time to stimulate acupuncture points. Gentle pressure may be applied to the studs on the legs three times a day, for some symptoms. If on the upper sternum, they need to be massaged when symptoms (shortness of breath) are present or prior to exercise.

Care of studs

There should be no problems with bathing or showering with studs in place over the sternum, as the clear plastic dressing provides a waterproof seal. If the plastic dressing appears to be coming off, the edges can be taped down with micropore tape, for example. Alternatively, the dressing may need to be replaced. Studs on the leg do not need to be held in place by a clear plastic dressing, so take care not to scrub too vigorously when in the bath or shower.

Observe the studs for signs of infection such as redness, soreness, inflammation of the skin or pus. If you do find any of these symptoms, follow the instructions below.

Removal of studs

The studs need to be changed at regular intervals either by you if on the legs, or at the hospital if over the sternum. If you are unable to attend when the studs are due for changing, please contact the hospital for advice.

1. To remove the studs on the legs yourself, peel off the plasters which have a minute needle embedded. If they are over the sternum, peel off the plastic film dressing - the studs should come off with the dressing.
2. Place the studs in the pot you were given in clinic and return it to the hospital for safe disposal. Do not dispose of studs in domestic waste as they may cause a sharps hazard.
3. Clean your skin with an antiseptic solution and leave open to the air to heal.



Insertion of studs

1. Wash your hands in the usual way
2. Identify the acupuncture point as advised by your acupuncturist
3. Mark with a biro (or other non-indelible pen) 1cm above this point
4. Clean with a swab below the biro mark and leave to dry for one minute
5. Take the stud out of the packet, taking care not to touch the needle tip, and insert it firmly below the point you have identified
6. Clean off the biro mark with the same swab
7. Leave in for two weeks, or as directed by your acupuncturist
8. Replace with a new stud in a slightly different spot each time, either 1cm above or below the original insertion site to prevent skin damage.

Possible problems

If you are at all concerned, please contact the hospital for advice.

Studs should not be used if you are having chemotherapy. If you are about to start chemotherapy, remove the studs one week before treatment or contact the hospital for advice.

Studs should not be used if you have problems with heart valves as there is a possibility of introducing infection. If you do have problems with heart valves, have a pacemaker, or are unsure, please contact The Royal Marsden for advice.

Studs should also not be used if you are having a course of radiotherapy.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about your acupuncture, please call the Pain Team secretaries.

Tel: 020 7808 2771

