

Instructions for self-needling

This factsheet provides clear step-by-step instructions on how to self-needle safely.

1. Wash your hands in the normal way
2. Have a tissue ready before you insert the needles so that you can press on the site if a speck of blood appears once a needle is removed
3. Remove the needle from its envelope without bending it; do not use a needle or introducer which has been dropped
4. Hold the introducer in your non-dominant hand tightly over the acupuncture point on the area of skin you have been advised to use
5. Using your dominant hand, twist the top of the needle to break the seal with the introducer
6. Tap the top of the needle briskly into the skin
7. Gently withdraw the introducer, taking care that it does not pull the needle out with it
8. Hold the junction between the plastic red handle and the needle and gently advance the needle about 1cm
9. Leave the needle in place for approximately 15 minutes
10. After treatment, withdraw the needle, steadying the skin with your other hand as you do so, using a tissue to gently press on the site if a speck of blood should appear
11. Dispose of the needle safely in the container that has been provided to you
12. After you complete one treatment a week for four to five weeks, return the pot to the hospital at your next visit for safe disposal of the needles and recycling of the pot.

Possible problems

- If a small drop of blood appears when you remove the needle, wipe it away with a clean tissue and press the site gently for a minute or two. If this site is on the foot, keep your leg raised until the bleeding has stopped. It is very unlikely for the bleeding to persist, however, if it does, apply firm pressure and seek medical advice.
- If a bruise appears where the needle was inserted there is probably no need to do anything, but if it is large or painful you can apply ice for approximately five minutes and seek medical advice if necessary.
- If a small 'bump' or tiny raised bruise appears when the needle is removed, press and flatten it gently with a tissue for a couple of minutes.



- It is extremely unlikely that the needle will break. Should this rare event occur, try to pull the end out with a pair of clean tweezers or similar implement. If this fails, consult your doctor or a hospital accident and emergency department.
- Very rarely the needle may be 'gripped' by the muscle and will be difficult to withdraw. Do not worry; just wait a few minutes and it should come out when you try to pull it out again.

Important notes

- Never put needles into areas of skin that are sore, infected, bruised or abnormal in any way
- If you are unsure of the instructions, do not self-needle
- Use only the needles that have been given to you by your acupuncture practitioner or the needles that they have advised you to purchase
- If you have any difficulty with the acupuncture, please telephone the hospital for advice and ask to speak to the Pain Team secretaries who will inform your acupuncture practitioner
- Please follow the instructions exactly, especially with regards to the frequency of treatment and site(s) of insertion - do not change these without first consulting your acupuncture practitioner
- If you are pregnant or are trying to become pregnant, you should not perform self-acupuncture until you have discussed it with your acupuncture practitioner
- Do not treat anyone else
- If anyone else becomes accidentally injured by one of your needles, you should get advice immediately from your acupuncture practitioner or a hospital accident and emergency department
- If you start taking aspirin, warfarin or other medicines to thin the blood, you should not perform self-acupuncture until you have discussed it with your acupuncture practitioner.

Contact details

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

Tel: 020 7808 2771

