

Acupuncture at Harborview

To help control your pain

This handout explains acupuncture. Acupuncture may be helpful for patients who are having moderate to severe pain.

Pain Control Goals

We want to help you control your pain so that you can do the activities that will help your body heal. But, we cannot remove all of your pain.

Most people have mild to moderate pain with activity while they are recovering. You can expect to have some pain and discomfort after your injury or procedure.

Realistic goals for pain control are:

- To prevent severe pain
- To keep your pain at a lower level

Pain Control Options

Your pain control plan may include options that don't use medicines. One of these is *acupuncture*. At Harborview Medical Center (HMC), we offer acupuncture to patients in the hospital who are receiving care from our Acute Pain Service or our Palliative Care Service.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Acupuncture may be used for many types of conditions. At HMC, we use it to control pain and its symptoms.

Acupuncture uses very thin, sterilized, stainless steel needles. These needles are applied to specific places on your body. These places are called *acupuncture points* or *acupoints*. Applying needles to these points can help your body heal. It can also help ease pain.



Be sure to ask your acupuncturist any questions you have about what to expect.

What happens during a session?

First, your acupuncturist will ask you about your pain. They will want to know where you feel the pain, and how strong it is. They will also check your pulse at the wrist and look at your tongue. These steps help them know where to place the needles. The acupuncturist may apply needles to your arms, legs, scalp, and even the outsides of your ears.

Your acupuncturist may also use a device that creates a very weak electrical current. During this treatment, your acupuncturist will use cords to connect a signal box to the needles. The current stimulates the acupuncture points. You will feel a light buzzing, but no pain.

Each session will be a little different. Most times, a treatment lasts 30 to 60 minutes. Some sessions last only 15 minutes. The number of treatments you receive will depend on your condition and how long you stay in the hospital.

Will the needles hurt?

The needles used in acupuncture are very tiny. Most times, they do not cause any pain. You should feel either a dull ache or nothing at all. At most, you may feel a small pinch or an itch that eases quickly.

Who will provide this treatment?

HMC partners with Bastyr University to provide acupuncture treatments. Each acupuncturist is fully licensed and working on their doctorate at Bastyr. These acupuncturists are supervised by a member of Bastyr's acupuncture faculty.

Where can I find an acupuncturist after I go home?

- You can set up an appointment at the **Bastyr Center for Natural Healing**. The center is at 3670 Stone Way N, Seattle, WA 98103. Their phone number is 206.834.4100.
- The **NCCAOM** website provides a list of certified acupuncturists. To search for practitioners in Seattle or in your local area, visit www.nccaom.org/find-a-practitioner-directory.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your nurse if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call your clinic:

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call the Community Care Line nurse: 206.744.2500.