

Acupuncture and physiotherapy



Needle acupuncture to specific points on the body can be beneficial in treatment of sporting injuries.

In Australia, acupuncture is considered to be an alternative form of therapy, outside the mainstream of traditional healthcare therapies. However, this is changing. The acceptance of the role of acupuncture is growing with an expansion in the number of practitioners including physiotherapists using acupuncture alongside conventional forms of treatment.

A course has been developed by the Acupuncture Special Interest Group in NSW, designed specifically to equip physiotherapists with the acupuncture skills necessary for the treatment of injuries.

Acupuncture can be used on its own, or in conjunction with other manual therapies or exercises.

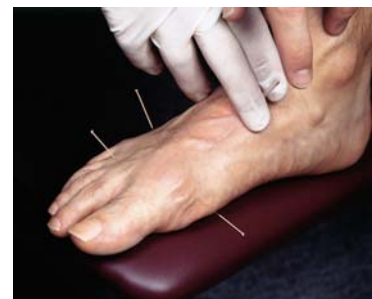
Often the aim of acupuncture is to reduce or alter pain and can be used in the acute or chronic stage of injury. It is thought that acupuncture works by stimulating the release of natural pain relief chemicals (endogenous opioids) within the body, which can work locally to relieve the injured area of pain. It is also thought to help block pain pathways often associated with chronic pain and thereby desensitise an injured area.

When placing needles in the body, acupuncture points or acupoints can be close to or on the injured areas, but also since acupuncture promotes analgesia, points can be used at regions remote from the site of injury. For example, if the athlete has shoulder pain, points that may be used will be near the shoulder, but also along the arm into the hand and in some cases the legs (See diagram 1).

Another indicator for the use of acupuncture is in the area of soft tissue injuries when there is excessive **muscle spasm** associated with pain in the injured region. Muscle spasm can be reduced by placing the needles into local trigger points (Ahshi points) that act locally causing muscle relaxation. Needles used in acupuncture vary in diameter from 0.12- 0.4mm. Thus they are much smaller than conventional medical needles and often treatment is pain-free.

Musculoskeletal injuries that can respond to acupuncture include, acute neck pain (wry neck), acute muscle strain, acute or chronic back pain, acute or chronic ankle sprain, headaches, stiff shoulders or knees, tennis elbow and plantar fasciitis.

It is important to be aware that acupuncture is also used in the management of other disorders. For acupuncture treatment or further information about acupuncture, please contact one of our physiotherapists who have completed a certificate in acupuncture.



Wakefield Sports Clinic

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