Geoff Wadlow
Acupuncture

Acupuncture for Low Back Pain

Low back pain is a common disorder, affecting around one-third of the UK adult population each year. Around 20% of people with low back pain (that is, 1 in 15 of the population) will consult their GP about it.

Acupuncture and pain

Many patients have benefited from treatment with acupuncture which has a reliable reputation for treating many different painful conditions. There is increasing research evidence to support their experiences. The combination of patients' experience and clinical evidence also supports the use of acupuncture for treating persistent or recurrent low back pain (see 'NICE recommends acupuncture').

Holistic medicine

Acupuncture is part of traditional Chinese medicine. Chinese medicine looks at your illness 'holistically', that is, in the context of your life. How you live your life, the food you eat, the work you do, the stress you are under, all these are considered to be as important as your symptoms and what is going on in your body to cause these symptoms. These things affect your body in subtle yet powerful ways, upsetting the normal flow of 'energy' and causing discomfort.

By identifying what elements are influencing your energetic flow, the acupuncturist can set about remedying the anomalies, partly with treatment, but also with guidance and advice.

Cumulative effect

Acupuncture doesn't just treat the symptoms of low back pain. It is not like taking a painkiller such as Paracetamol, where the effect is only short-lived and the medication has no long-term effect on the incidence of back pain. If acupuncture is applied properly, its effect is cumulative, each treatment producing more of an effect. The pain in your back reduces in intensity and spread, usually a over a period of days or weeks. As your symptoms improve, the frequency of acupuncture treatment can slowly reduce. Eventually, if the symptoms disappear completely, then treatment can be discontinued. Some patients need maintenance treatment, possibly once per month or less.

Tackling the underlying problem

Acupuncture can have this effect because the treatment is designed to tackle the underlying 'energetic' disturbance that causes the low back pain. Typically, needles are inserted in the lumbar area, the upper and lower leg, and the feet. In addition, as has been mentioned already, it is important to identify any predisposing factors, such as poor posture or stress. As the symptoms improve, you can begin to take control and manage these predisposing factors so that they have less effect, your back being stronger and more resilient.

If you have not already done so, you may be asked to consult your GP before commencing treatment.

Appointments:

Dorchester
07720 648689

Broadstone,
Poole
01202 901777

or

geoffreywadlow
@icloud.com

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