

## HEALTH

# A friend in needle

*An alternative therapy recommended by the World Health Organisation? If you have a nagging health complaint or just want a bit of a lift, acupuncture might be just what you're looking for. Joe Spurgeon talks to Bristol's newest practitioner, Jo Bond.*

### What turned you on to acupuncture?

I've always been interested in health and wellbeing and knew I wanted to work with people rather than in a desk job. I have family members who work in medicine and nursing and I really appreciate all the amazing things Western medicine can do, but I'm also aware of its failings. I became interested in how alternative treatment can make a real difference to complaints and illnesses that people struggle to deal with through the NHS. I knew a few people who'd had acupuncture and found it really beneficial so wanted to know more about how it worked.

### How does it work, then? Has it been 'accepted' by the medical community?

Traditional Chinese medicine teaches that there are energy channels in the body essential to good health. Blockages in certain areas can lead to illness. Internal factors, such as repressed or 'stuck' emotions, and external factors, such as injury and climatic factors, all affect a person's energy and lead to symptoms on a physical, mental and emotional level. Acupuncture points are particular places where this energy can be accessed and unblocked. It is very useful as a complementary therapy, but also a complete stand-alone system of healing.

It's one of the most accepted 'alternative' therapies in the West. The World Health Organisation [WHO] recommended its use for over 40 different complaints and the National Institute of Clinical Excellence [NICE] recently recommended that GPs refer patients with lower back pain.

### Who is acupuncture for?

That's simple - acupuncture is for everyone! It is really good for specific complaints, but acupuncture is also traditionally used as an aid to better general health. A lot of people feel a positive difference from the first treatment, but a course of treatments will build and sustain this. For longer-term problems, it is reasonable to expect a course of 5-6 treatments to start to unwind the blockages.

It's important also to say that, as acupuncture is a 'holistic' therapy, we look at all areas of the person's health and lifestyle to build a diagnosis, and treatment sessions include dietary and lifestyle advice too.



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**JO BOND**

### You must build quite a close relationship with your clients.

You could say that - it tends to be a trusting relationship and it is important that the client feels able to say whatever they need. For this reason, confidentiality is really important. People come for all sorts of reasons - someone might come for a couple of treatments to sort out a bad back, while another might become a regular client over several months or years.

It's important to understand different emotional experiences of things like stress. This doesn't mean sessions have to be overly touchy-feely, and I don't feel my role is a counsellor, but I will assess an appropriate level for each patient.

### Are there conditions you wouldn't recommend it for?

Not really, aside from maybe broken bones - there's some really good western medical treatment available for those!

It's very safe - it's fine for pregnant women, for example - and any complaint is applicable. Acupuncture is a holistic treatment and treats the person rather than the disease. Even needle-phobes find they can be OK if introduced gently.

### Does it hurt?

Generally it doesn't hurt, though there is a sensation, usually described as an ache or pressure. There are acupuncture points all over the body and the ones that are chosen will depend on your complaint. The majority of the most commonly used points are below the elbows and knees but gowns and blankets are provided so no-one should feel uncomfortable. If there's an area you don't want needled, I can usually find an alternative point.

### What about your practice? What does it cost?

I am currently working in Clifton [7 Richmond Hill Avenue], right behind the students' union and very close to bus stops. The first one-and-a-half-hour session, which will involve an in-depth consultation covering your medical and family history, and the first treatment costs £45. Subsequent treatments are £35 and will last 45-50mins. I give discounts for students, OAPs, unwaged and those in receipt of benefits.

I am more than happy to have a no-obligations chat with anyone who would like more information.

The new year is a really good time to address the things you've always meant to, be it dealing better with stress, giving up smoking or trying something new to deal with chronic complaints like, for example, headaches, backache or IBS.

**FFI:** [WWW.ACUPUNCTUREWITHJO.CO.UK](http://WWW.ACUPUNCTUREWITHJO.CO.UK), EMAIL: [JO@ACUPUNCTUREWITHJO.CO.UK](mailto:JO@ACUPUNCTUREWITHJO.CO.UK), TEL: 07969 638026.