Patient Information
A04

NHS Golden Jubilee

Using acupuncture to reduce nausea and vomiting after your operation at the Golden Jubilee

Reviewed: October 2025
Next review: October 2026
Version 2

About this booklet

The purpose of this booklet is to provide information about the use of acupuncture to help reduce nausea and vomiting after your operation.

This will include details of what an Acupin plaster is, how it works, and how this helps manage your symptoms.

After your surgery

It is common after an operation to experience some kind of nausea (feeling sick), or vomiting.

Traditionally, this is treated and controlled with drugs. However, our multidisciplinary team are also able to offer an alternative treatment: using acupuncture to help manage your symptoms.

This is done using a special acupuncture plaster called an Acupin. The following sections will explain how this works, and answer some common questions about the use of acupuncture.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture involves inserting very fine needles into specific points on your body. It is known as a complimentary therapy and can be used to treat many different medical problems.



Recently, research has shown that using a small needle (an Acupin) in the wrist area is very effective in preventing and treating post-operative nausea and vomiting.

This will normally be used alongside a combination of anti-sickness drugs, to help get you feeling better as quickly as possible following your operation.

What does having acupuncture involve?

A very small acupuncture pin, which looks like a small plaster, will be placed just above your wrist before you go to theatre.

What will I feel when the Acupin is put in?

Most people do not feel anything at all. Occasionally when the Acupin is first put in place, you may feel the following sensations:

- Tingling
- Itching
- Warmth
- Aching

Please do not worry, these are all normal acupuncture sensations and will usually only last a few minutes. If any of these sensations continue, please inform the nurse.

Are there any risks involved in having acupuncture?

It is safe, simple and should not hurt. However, in rare cases, acupuncture can cause:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Redness
- Numbness and persistent tingling in your fingers

If you have any of these, please call the nurse. The Acupin will need to be removed, and these symptoms should get better over the next few hours.

It will then be up to you if you would like to have another Acupin placed in the other wrist, or simply continue with anti-sickness drugs.

Do I have to do anything?

Once the Acupin is put in, it will start to work by itself.

However, if you do feel nausea or sickness you should apply gentle pressure over the Acupin for a few seconds. There is no limit to the amount of times that you can apply pressure.

What do I do if I still feel sick?

If you feel that the pressure on the acupuncture pin is not relieving your sickness, let the nurse know and they can give you some anti-sickness drugs.

It is safe and effective to use both the acupin and anti-sickness drugs at the same time. However, it is important to understand that we can't always completely take away feelings of sickness.

Are some people more likely to be sick than others?

Yes, depending on a variety of factors, there is a chance some people will feel sicker than others.

Below are some of the more common factors which can have an effect on how sick you feel after surgery.

- Some anaesthetic drugs used are more likely to make you feel sick.
- The type and length of your operation.
- The types of painkiller used.
- Your previous history of post-operative nausea and vomiting.
- People undergoing knee replacements will often feel nauseous after surgery.

If you are female or a person who suffers from travel sickness, you may also be more likely to experience nausea and vomiting after an operation.

Further information

For further information or if you have any questions after you go home, contact the follow up service number in your surgery specific information booklet.

Notes

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reviewed for plain English

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