

# waterside dentalcare

## acupuncture

### **What is acupuncture?**

Acupuncture has been in used in dentistry around Europe for more than 25 years. It is used as an additional technique in the treatment of dental anxiety, gagging, facial pain and temporomandibular pain.

The traditional theory involves life energy '*Chi*' which flows around the body in channels '*Meridians*'. If one of these meridians becomes blocked and obstructs the flow of chi, the patient suffers pain or illness. The acupuncture unblocks this obstruction, restoring normal flow of chi, and the patient's health therefore improves.

The modern (western) understanding of acupuncture is less well understood. But there is no doubt that acupuncture does work, clinical evidence and controlled trials are present to demonstrate this. Some forms of acupuncture are believed to work by stimulating small myelinated fibres in muscle, which in turn promotes the release of endorphins, which act as our body's natural pain relief.

### **What does the procedure involve?**

Acupuncture is the placement of very fine needles into certain areas of the body, such as the hands, wrists and face. These will remain present for approximately 30minutes or throughout the dental procedure.

### **How often will I require acupuncture?**

Depending on the reason for the acupuncture, it'll either be required at most appointments – such as in anxiety and gagging, but for the treatment of TMJ or facial pain, approximately five sessions are required. It is advised that if there is no improvement after three sessions it is not worth continuing.

### **Are there any side-effects and complications?**

Bleeding following removal of the needles is rare and usually minor. There can be minor soreness of the needle area for the 24hours following treatment, and very occasionally bruising/haematoma at the site also.

Fainting and tiredness can follow, and very occasionally in patients who have a strong response to acupuncture they can feel very unwell.

### **Are there any contraindications?**

We wouldn't recommend or suggest acupuncture in pregnancy, or for those with a medical history of bleeding disorders, prosthetic heart valves, undiagnosed pain or rheumatoid arthritis.