

# Auricular (Ear) Acupuncture and Acupressure

This handout explains what auricular (pronounced uh-ri-kyuh-lr) acupuncture is, what the risks are, and what auricular acupressure is.

## What is auricular acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a form of therapy in which specific points on your body are stimulated by very thin needles. Auricular acupuncture involves inserting needles in one or both ears. The needles stay in your ears for 10 - 30 minutes before they are removed by your Integrative Medicine provider.

Auricular acupuncture is a simple and safe way for treating symptoms and side effects of cancer treatment. It can be used on its own or with other forms of therapy and is helpful treating:

- Pain related to cancer treatment
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping
- Hot flashes



## What are the risks of auricular acupuncture?

The risks of auricular acupuncture are low when performed by a licensed, experienced Integrative Medicine provider. The needles used in each treatment are sterile and will be thrown away after each treatment. Auricular acupuncture treatments are generally well tolerated by most patients.

Common side effects may include soreness and minor bleeding or bruising where the needles were inserted.

Our Integrative Medicine providers will review your medical history and labs before each treatment to determine if auricular acupuncture is right for you. They will ask if you have low white blood cell count or low platelet count. They will also ask if you are pregnant.

## What is auricular acupressure?

Acupressure stimulates the same specific points used with acupuncture but with ear seeds instead of needles. Ear seeds:

- Are small seeds that are used to stimulate acupuncture points in your ear.
- Are made from the Vaccaria plant. The seeds are placed on top of the skin on your ear and are held in place with medical tape.
- Should be gently stimulated by pressing on the seed with light to medium pressure for at least three minutes, three times per day or as needed for symptom relief as shown by your provider. It is normal to feel some pressure or tenderness when stimulating the seeds.
- Can stay on your ears for up to 5 days.
- Are not made of metal and are safe to wear during medical imaging scans.
- Should stay on when you take a shower, bath, or when you are sleeping.
- Are safe if they fall out or get lost because they do not break through the skin.
- Should be removed and thrown away before receiving brain, head and/or neck radiation therapy.
- Should not be replaced if they fall off accidentally.
- Should be removed and thrown away if they are still in place after 5 days.
- If the ear seeds become painful or the surrounding skin becomes red, itchy, or sore, gently remove the tape and seed and carefully and throw them away in the trash. Clean the area with soap and water.



## Questions?

If you have questions after reading this handout, please talk with your Integrative Medicine provider.