

## FACT SHEET

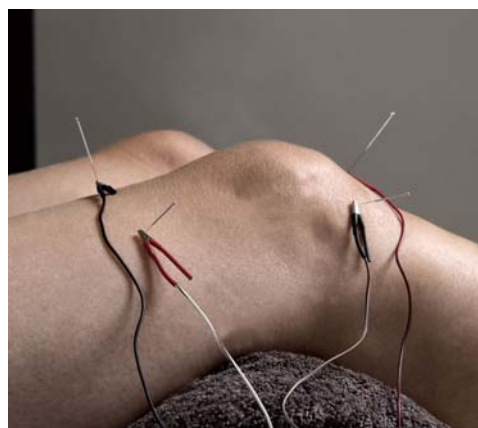
British  
Acupuncture  
Council

[www.acupuncture.org.uk](http://www.acupuncture.org.uk)

### Electroacupuncture

Electroacupuncture (**EA**) is a relatively modern technique that has increasingly become an accepted form of acupuncture treatment. It is usually defined as the electrical stimulation of acupuncture points through needles.

More broadly, **EA** describes all procedures based on measurements or therapy derived from traditional Chinese acupuncture but using modern electronics. As such, it encompasses many different forms of treatment, including transcutaneous (skin surface) stimulation of the points with TENS ('transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation') devices or handheld probes (pTENS, or 'point TENS'). The beneficial effects of **EA** are often explained in terms of neurophysiology rather than traditional acupuncture theory.



In some forms of **EA**, treatment is decided upon after taking electrical measurements at the acupuncture points. 'Electroacupuncture according to Voll' (EAV) and 'Ryodoraku' are examples of such methods. These techniques require specialist training.

**EA** is used to treat many of the same conditions as traditional acupuncture, particularly those involving *qi* and/or Blood stagnation. It can also be helpful for relaxation, for improving circulation (in, for example, leg ulcers or Raynaud's syndrome) and for muscular problems (including some forms of muscle spasm, muscle wasting and paralysis).

**EA** can be used as an alternative to drugs to induce labour. **EA** is also very helpful during childbirth for both relaxation and pain relief, and can be used for problems after the baby is born, such as excessive bleeding or difficulties delivering the placenta.

**EA** may be used alongside traditional methods, or as a 'stand-alone' treatment. Since it allows strong and more continuous stimulation, **EA** can in some situations be more effective than traditional needling. The effects of needling are often potentiated, and the results may be more rapid and longer lasting.

**EA** in the form of transcutaneous (skin surface) stimulation may be more acceptable than traditional needling for children, for very sensitive patients, for those with poor immune function or bleeding disorders, and especially for people who are afraid of needles.

**EA** should only be carried out by a properly trained practitioner, since there are some situations where its use is not recommended. However, under the supervision of an acupuncturist and with the use of clear written instructions, transcutaneous methods may be safely used at home between treatment sessions. This can prove a cost-effective option for some patients whose conditions require more frequent treatment.

More information on conditions treated with **EA** can be found at [www.electroacupunctureknowledge.com](http://www.electroacupunctureknowledge.com), a website sponsored by the British Acupuncture Council.

This factsheet has been produced by David Mayor MBAcC for

The British Acupuncture Council  
63 Jeddo Road  
London  
W12 9HQ

Tel: 020 8735 0400

Fax: 020 8735 0404

Email: [info@acupuncture.org.uk](mailto:info@acupuncture.org.uk)

[www.acupuncture.org.uk](http://www.acupuncture.org.uk)