

P96. DO THE NEEDLES USED FOR ACUPUNCTURE HAVE TOXIC EFFECTS? 'HEAVY METAL DEPOSITION IN THE SKIN; ARGYRIA'

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Argyria is a condition characterised by bluish-grey to slate-grey staining of the skin and mucous membranes caused by deposition of silver particles in the skin, secondary to acute high level, or to chronic lower level, exposure to elemental silver, silver dust or silver compounds.

Forms of localised argyria are the appearance of blue macules at sites of acupuncture needles and silver earring sites, ocular argyrosis from overuse of silver containing eyedrops or cosmetic makeup.

FDA approved acupuncture needles as medical supplies in 1996. Modern acupuncture needles are in various lengths and width. The metals used for acupuncture needles are silver, gold, copper and stainless steel. There is a few argyria cases reported due to silver needles used for acupuncture.

World Health Organisation says; 'Stainless steel is the material of choice for acupuncture needles. Each should be carefully checked before use. If it is bent, the shaft eroded, or the tip hooked or blunt, the needle is defective and should be discarded.' and 'Acupuncture can be considered inherently safe in the hands of well trained practitioners.'