

Acupuncture 'probably ineffective' in treatment of hot flushes

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Acupuncture cannot be shown to have any positive effect on hot flushes during the menopause. This is the conclusion of a systematic review of literature by three groups in Daejon, Busan (South Korea) and Exeter (UK), published in the current edition of the peer-reviewed journal *Climacteric*.

Many women are concerned by the unfavourable publicity given to HRT use, but still have to deal with the symptoms which can occur during and after the [menopause](#). A significant minority of women look for alternatives to HRT to deal with these symptoms. Often these alternatives are untested, and it can be impossible to balance the risks and benefits of these treatments against the risks and benefits of conventional treatments or the discomfort of untreated menopause.

The researchers reviewed studies on the use of [acupuncture](#) for the relief of hot flushes during the menopause. They identified 106 studies in total, which they eventually narrowed down to the six most relevant to the study. These six studies were randomised controlled trials (RCTs), which included testing the effects of real acupuncture against the effect of sham acupuncture. Only one RCT reported favorable effect of acupuncture on the frequency and severity of hot flush after 4 weeks follow-up, while the other five RCTs demonstrated no such effects.

Researchers caution that the quality of good studies is not great, and that because of this the use of acupuncture cannot be completely ruled out. However, the available literature indicates that acupuncture does not

seem to be effective in the treatment of menopausal hot flushes.

Lead researcher, Dr Myeong Soo Lee (Korea Institute of Oriental Medicine, South Korea) said:

Although the availability of good Randomised Controlled Trials is too small to draw any firm conclusion, in general the evidence from sham-controlled RCTs for the effects of acupuncture for treating menopausal hot flush is not convincing. We would always recommend that women wanting relief from menopausal symptoms consult their clinician before undertaking any course of treatment.

Commenting, Dr David Sturdee (President of the International Menopause Society) said:

There's no doubt that many women need relief from the symptoms associated with the menopause. They need to make sure that the treatment they choose works, and is right for them. I would always recommend that a woman consult her clinician before starting any treatment.

Source: International Menopause Society

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