

Acupuncture may bring relief for a common condition in women

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Polycystic ovary syndrome, a common condition among women, can be relieved by the use of acupuncture and exercise. This has been shown by a recent study at the Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Nearly 10% of women of reproductive age have polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). The syndrome expresses itself as a large number of small immature cysts on the ovaries that cause a disturbance in the production of hormones and an increase in the secretion of the male sex hormone. This means that many women with the condition do not ovulate normally, and the syndrome may lead to infertility. The women run an increased risk of becoming obese, developing [type 2 diabetes](#), or developing cardio-vascular disease.

"We do not know for certain what causes the condition, despite it being so common. We have seen that women with the syndrome often have high activity in that part of the nervous system that we cannot consciously control, known as the "sympathetic nervous system". We believe that this may be an important underlying factor in the syndrome", says Elisabet Stener-Victorin, who has led the research at the Sahlgrenska Academy.

During the study, one group of women with polycystic ovary syndrome received [acupuncture](#) regularly for four months. They received a type of acupuncture known as "electro-acupuncture", in which the needles are stimulated with a weak low-frequency electric current, similar to that

developed during muscular work. A second group of women were provided with heart rate monitors and instructed to exercise at least three times a week. A control group was informed about the importance of exercise and a healthy diet, but was given no other specific instructions.

The study showed that activity in the sympathetic nervous system was lower in the women who received acupuncture and in those who took regular exercise than it was in the control group. The acupuncture treatment brought further benefits.

"Those who received acupuncture found that their menstruation became more normal. We could also see that their levels of testosterone became significantly lower, and this is an important observation, since elevated testosterone levels are closely connected with the increased activity in the sympathetic [nervous system](#) of [women](#)", says Elisabet Stener-Victorin.

Source: University of Gothenburg ([news](#) : [web](#))

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