

Acupuncture used in clinical settings reduced symptoms of menopause

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Acupuncture treatments can reduce the number of hot flashes and night sweats associated with menopause by as much as 36 percent, according to researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. The findings are published in the June issue of the journal *Menopause*.

"Although [acupuncture](#) does not work for every woman, our study showed that, on average, acupuncture effectively reduced the frequency of hot flashes and results were maintained for six months after the treatments stopped," said Nancy Avis, Ph.D., professor of public health sciences at Wake Forest Baptist and lead author of the study.

The study, which was funded by National Institutes of Health, included 209 women ages 45 to 60 who had not had a menstrual period for at least three months and had on average at least four hot flashes or night sweats per day in the previous two weeks. Participants received a baseline assessment and were then randomized to one of two groups.

The first group received acupuncture treatments during the first six months. They were then followed without receiving acupuncture for the second six months. The second group did not receive any acupuncture during the first six months, but did receive acupuncture for the second six months.

The participants were allowed up to 20 treatments within six months provided by licensed, experienced acupuncturists in the community. All participants kept a daily diary on the frequency and severity of their hot

flashes. They also answered questionnaires about other symptoms every two months.

Avis said the study was designed to make it more "real world" by leaving the frequency and number of the acupuncture treatments up to the study participants and their acupuncturists. After six months, the first group reported an average 36.7 percent decline in frequency of hot flashes compared to baseline measurements. After a year, the benefits persisted, with the group members maintaining an average 29.4 percent reduction from baseline.

The second group reported a 6 percent increase in symptom frequency during the six [months](#) when they were not getting acupuncture, but had similar results - an average 31 percent reduction in [frequency](#) - to the first group after receiving acupuncture during the latter part of the trial.

"There are a number of non-hormonal options for treating [hot flashes](#) and night sweats that are available to women," Avis said. "None of these options seem to work for everyone, but our study showed that acupuncture from a licensed acupuncturist can help some women without any side effects. Our study also showed that the maximum benefit occurred after about eight treatments."

Avis cautioned that the effect shown in the study could be due to non-specific effects such as the additional care and attention the [study participants](#) received or the expectation of a benefit. She also said that additional research is needed to identify individual differences in response to acupuncture.

Provided by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

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