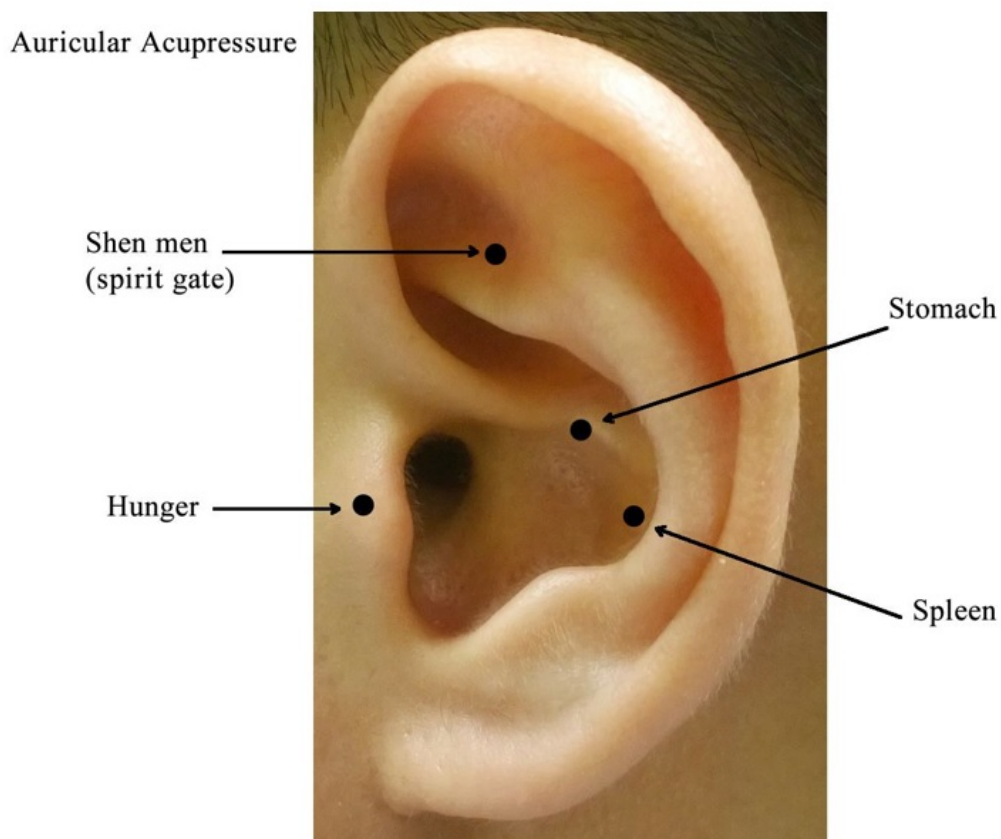


# Clinical trial acupuncture proves effectiveness for weight control

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Acupoints at the ear. Credit: Hong Kong Baptist University

The School of Chinese Medicine (SCM) of Hong Kong Baptist University recently completed a clinical trial on the use of acupuncture for weight control. After an eight-week treatment, the participants' average body weight decreased by 2.47 kg, with a weight loss of 7.2 kg for the most successful participant, whose Body Mass Index (BMI) dropped by  $3.2 \text{ kg/m}^2$ . The trial was initial testimony to the effectiveness of acupuncture for controlling the weight of adults.

In cooperation with the Hong Kong Hospital Authority, the School conducted the trial from September 2015 to October 2016 on 72 participants, comprising 13 males and 59 females aged between 18 and 68. The participants had a BMI of 25 or above but none of them had taken any other [weight control](#) measures or any medication three months prior to the trial.

The participants were randomly assigned to two groups for the controlled trial: the "real acupuncture group" and the "sham acupuncture group". Each participant underwent a total of 16 sessions of acupuncture treatment over eight weeks. The acupoints on the abdomen include Tianshu, Dahan, Daimai, Qihai, and Zhongwan while those on the lower limbs are Zusanli, Fenlong, and Sanyinjiao. The participants also received auricular acupressure by putting Semen Vaccariae (Wang Bu Liu Xing) embedded within adhesive tape on auricular points of Hunger, Shen men, Spleen and Stomach. According to the Chinese medicine perspective, these acupoints can restore and harmonise the flow of energy in the intestines as well as transform body fluid and expel phlegm.

After undergoing acupuncture treatment, the "real acupuncture group" delivered a decrease of 2.47 kg in average weight and a drop of  $1.56 \text{ kg/m}^2$  in average BMI. The most successful case recorded [weight loss](#) of 7.2 kg with a drop of  $3.2 \text{ kg/m}^2$  in BMI. The "sham acupuncture group" had an average weight loss of 0.54 kg with an average lowering of 0.19

kg/m<sup>2</sup> in BMI.

Director of the HKBU Hong Kong Chinese Medicine Study Centre and Clinical Division of SCM Professor Bian Zhaoxing is the research team's principal investigator. Other research members included Lecturer of the Clinical Division Dr Yang Junjun, Associate Professor of the Teaching and Research Division Dr Zhang Shiping, and Research Assistant Professor of the Clinical Division Dr Zhong Lidan.

Dr Zhong said that acupuncture has a stimulating effect. The mechanism of acupuncture may be that the stimulation to the serotonin and beta endorphin will suppress appetite and increase lipolysis activity, resulting in weight loss. She explained that this trial provides preliminary evidence of the efficacy and safety of acupuncture on [weight](#) control in Hong Kong. It also offers a research basis for future large sample clinical trials and a guideline for developing [acupuncture](#) to counter obesity.

Provided by Hong Kong Baptist University

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