

Could acupuncture help ward off diabetes?

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It's been used for thousands of years to treat a variety of illnesses—and now acupuncture could also help fight one of the 21st century's biggest health challenges.

A new study from Edith Cowan University has found acupuncture

therapy may be a useful tool in avoiding type 2 diabetes.

The research team investigated dozens of studies covering the effects of acupuncture on more than 3600 people with prediabetes, a condition which sees higher-than-normal blood glucose levels without being high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes.

The findings showed acupuncture therapy significantly improved key markers, such as fasting [plasma glucose](#), two-hour plasma glucose, and glycated hemoglobin, plus a greater decline in the incidence of prediabetes.

There were also no reports of adverse reactions among patients.

Ph.D. candidate and lead researcher Min Zhang said this showed great promise for acupuncture therapy as an additional option to ward off diabetes, which is estimated to affect 11 percent of the world's [adult population](#).

The International Diabetes Federation estimates nearly 1.3 billion people will have either diabetes or prediabetes by 2045.

"Without intervention, 93 percent of people with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes within 20 years," Ms Zhang said.

"But unlike diabetes, prediabetes is reversible with [lifestyle interventions](#) such as improved diet and increase in exercise".

"But many people struggle to adhere to lifestyle changes long-term, so non-pharmacological treatments such as acupuncture could prove valuable."

A holistic approach

Though diabetes is often associated to lifestyle factors, other aspects of life may also have an impact—which is where acupuncture comes in.

"It's not only about blood sugar levels," Ms Zhang said.

"If you experience sleep problems, [high blood pressure](#), a lot of stress, these can contribute too.

"So, acupuncture can help with these factors and work holistically to help people balance their life."

Ms Zhang said it's important to note acupuncture [therapy](#) is more than just using needles—it refers to a big family of acupoint stimulation techniques, such as light and electric pulses, and includes other traditional Chinese medicine therapies such as moxibustion.

"This is important because diabetic people can have issues with their skin, so perhaps it may not always be ideal to be using needles," she said.

"We need to do more research into [acupuncture](#) and diabetes, because we need to find more ways to prevent prediabetes developing into type 2 diabetes."

"Many people with prediabetes don't have any symptoms and feel fine, but some people progress into the diabetes period no more than 6 months after their prediabetes diagnosis.

"In fact, prediabetes intervention is an investment rather than an expenditure.

"So, the best time to prevent type 2 [diabetes](#) is now."

"Should Acupuncture-Related Therapies be considered in Prediabetes

Control? Results from a Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials" was published in *Holistic Nursing Practice*.

More information: Min Zhang et al, Should Acupuncture-Related Therapies be Considered in Prediabetes Control? Results From a Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials, *Holistic Nursing Practice* (2022). [DOI: 10.1097/HNP.0000000000000530](https://doi.org/10.1097/HNP.0000000000000530)

Provided by Edith Cowan University

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