

Individualized acupuncture shows long-term efficacy in reducing chronic neck pain, research suggests

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A randomized controlled trial found that individualized acupuncture may reduce chronic neck pain for up to 24 weeks when compared to sham

acupuncture and a waitlist control group. Although the clinical significance remains uncertain, the findings suggest that pressure pain and sensory-based acupoints could offer a promising treatment approach for persistent neck pain.

The findings are [published](#) in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Chronic neck pain is extremely common, affecting more than 280 million people globally. Researchers from Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chengdu, Sichuan China randomly assigned 716 participants with [chronic neck pain](#) to one of four groups: a waiting list (WL) group or three different [acupuncture](#) groups—higher sensitive acupoints (HSA), lower sensitive acupoints (LSA), or sham acupoints (SA). Each participant in the acupuncture groups received 10 sessions over four weeks.

The main goal was to measure the change in neck pain using a visual analog scale (VAS) from 0 to 100, where a 10-point difference indicated a meaningful improvement. The pain levels were tracked every four weeks for up to 24 weeks to assess the long-term effects of the treatment.

The researchers found that in contrast to SA and a WL control, individualized acupuncture was more effective in reducing pain for a minimum of 24 weeks.

According to the researchers, these findings are important because interventions such as [nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs](#) and opioids may cause undesirable adverse effects and complications. As such, non-pharmacotherapy, like acupuncture, is considered a safer and more appropriate option.

More information: Ling Zhao et al, Long-Term Effects of

Individualized Acupuncture for Chronic Neck Pain, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2024). [DOI: 10.7326/M23-2425](https://doi.org/10.7326/M23-2425)

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