Medical Xpress

Lower back pain? Self-administered acupressure could help: study

August 21 2019

Credit: Michigan Medicine

A recent study finds that acupressure, a traditional Chinese medicine technique, can improve chronic pain symptoms in the lower back.

"Acupressure is similar to acupuncture, but instead of needles, pressure is applied with a finger, thumb or device to specific points on the body," says Susan Murphy, ScD, OTR, an associate professor of physical

medicine and rehabilitation at Michigan Medicine and lead author of the study.

Murphy says that while acupressure has been previously studied—and found to be beneficial—in people with cancer-related or osteoarthritis pain, there are few studies that have examined acupressure in people with back pain.

In the study, published in *Pain Medicine*, the research team randomly assigned 67 participants with chronic low back pain into three groups: relaxing acupressure, stimulating acupressure or usual care.

"Relaxing acupressure is thought to be effective in reducing insomnia, while stimulating acupressure is thought to be effective in fatigue reduction," Murphy says.

Participants in the acupressure groups were trained to administer acupressure on certain points of the body, and spent between 27 and 30 minutes daily, over the course of six weeks, performing the technique.

Participants in the usual care group were asked to continue whatever treatments they were currently receiving from their care providers to manage their back pain and fatigue.

"Compared to the usual care group, we found that people who performed stimulating acupressure experienced pain and fatigue improvement and those that performed relaxing acupressure felt their pain had improved after six weeks," Murphy says.

"We found no differences among the groups in terms of sleep quality or disability after the six weeks."

Potential treatment option

Murphy notes that chronic pain is difficult to manage and people with the condition tend to have additional symptoms such as fatigue, sleep disturbance and depression.

"Better treatments are needed for chronic pain," Murphy says. "Most treatments offered are medications, which have side effects, and in some cases, may increase the risk of abuse and addiction."

She says this study highlights the benefits of a non-pharmacological treatment option that patients could perform easily on their own and see positive results.

"Although larger studies are needed, acupressure may be a useful pain management strategy given that it is low risk, low cost and easy to administer," Murphy says.

"We also recommend additional studies into the different types of acupressure and how they could more specifically be targeted to patients based on their symptoms."

More information: Susan Lynn Murphy et al, Self-Administered Acupressure for Chronic Low Back Pain: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial, *Pain Medicine* (2019). DOI: 10.1093/pm/pnz138

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Lower back pain? Self-administered acupressure could help: study (2019, August 21) retrieved 5 May 2024 from
https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-pain-self-administered-acupressure.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.