

HEALTH REPORT

VOLUME 11

ISSUE 135

PRESSURE APPLIED TO ACUPUNCTURE POINTS BRINGS LONG-LASTING LOW BACK PAIN RELIEF

When a person complains of low back pain, physical therapy is often included in the treatment. Now, based on the results of a recent study, simply applying Acupressure to a troubled area may bring very favorable results. Acupressure is the applying of pressure to the body with the thumbs or the forefingers to the same points that are stimulated in Acupuncture.

Low back pain is a common health problem that is experienced by a considerable percentage of the population worldwide. In previous studies, Acupressure had been shown to be effective in alleviating various types of pain, but little was known about its effect on low back pain.

In a recent survey published online by the *British Medical Journal*, Acupressure was found to be considerably more effective in bringing relief for low back pain than did physical therapy.

The study was conducted in Taiwan where 129 patients with chronic low back pain were recruited from an orthopedic clinic. Each of the participants completed a standard disability questionnaire prior to beginning treatment. Of the patients, 64 received Acupressure treatment for six sessions. The remaining 65 patients received physical therapy. The results of their treatments were measured immediately after the treatment program and again 6 months later.

Researchers found that the average disability score for the group receiving Acupressure was significantly lower than in the group that received physical therapy. In fact, Acupressure provided an 89% reduction in disability compared with the physical therapy group. Researchers found that this improvement continued on through 6 months. It was also noted in the study results that the benefits of Acupressure were also greater for such variables as “leg pain,” “pain interferes with normal work” and “days off from work or school.”

This study supports the conclusions of earlier studies involving the benefits of Acupressure for a variety of other health concerns. Acupressure may be useful for reducing pain, improving body function and reducing the level of disability from low back pain. Additionally, they found it important that it was not only a short-term benefit. Acupressure as applied to low back pain brought long-lasting relief.

HEALTH REPORT

VOLUME 9

ISSUE 134

ACUPRESSURE BETTER FOR LOW BACK PAIN THAN PHYSICAL THERAPY

A study completed at the National Taiwan University in Taipei found Acupressure is a more effective treatment in reducing low back pain than conventional physical therapy.

A test group of 129 people, identified by researchers as suffering from chronic low pain, were recruited through an orthopedic clinic. Each received a standard disability questionnaire. 65 were assigned a standard physical therapy treatment regimen, and 64 received 6 Acupressure treatments over a one-month period.

Acupressure (pushing specific points with the fingertips to release tension and increase circulation) utilizes all of the same body points as Acupuncture. To keep the treatment consistent, all of the subjects received treatment from the same therapist.

The study concluded that Acupressure gave patients better, longer-lasting relief for low back pain. An 89% reduction in disability was reported for the Acupressure group, who also scored better on measures of pain and had fewer days off from work or school.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion of this study was that when the patients were followed-up six months later, they still had the benefits of the Acupressure treatment.

SOURCE: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_30076.html

HEALTH REPORT

VOLUME 10

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ACUPUNCTURE GIVES WOMAN HER LIFE BACK

Life in general was becoming a real pain in the . . . back and the hips and the knees for a 73-year-old British woman. The discomfort had been going on for some time, but it really hit home one Christmas Day.

“My youngest grandchild was 4 years old and he couldn’t understand why I wouldn’t play with him on the floor on Christmas Day,” said Maureen Vine. It was just too painful. The terrible pain in my ankle spread to my foot and I could barely walk.”

Acupuncture was something she’d never really considered during her 30-odd years of suffering through a painful condition diagnosed as osteoarthritis. The symptoms that mainly affected her back, hips and knees over the years were now spreading to her right ankle. This caused pain and limping, greatly reducing her ability to move or even to continue with short walks in the park she cherished.

Over the years she had tried physiotherapy, but with little relief. A stomach condition prohibited most types of medication. Most recently, her doctor had prescribed Co-dydramol™, a pain reducer she was able to tolerate, but even 8 tablets a day brought little to no relief.

Finally, almost completely housebound, Maureen decided to give Acupuncture a try. “My son had recently tried Acupuncture for his arthritic shoulder and he said that it had worked wonders. Although I knew nothing about it and was a bit skeptical, I was willing to try anything. So I asked my doctor for a referral.”

Maureen’s acupuncturist evaluated her condition and decided on a whole body approach to treatment. A total of 15 needles were used in both limbs for a total of 15 minutes each. “It felt a little strange at first, but once you realize it doesn’t hurt, you get used to it,” she said.

Her acupuncturist was so pleased with her response to treatment and her improved condition that short walks were prescribed after just 3 weeks. By this time the pain in her ankle and knee was almost completely gone. After just 6 sessions, Maureen was pain free throughout her body and her Acupuncture treatments were over.

“Nothing has alleviated the pain of my arthritis like this,” she says. “These days, there’s no pain in my ankle or foot or my knees. I only get the occasional twinge in my hip when I turn in bed. I still can’t quite believe it, but I’m an absolute convert to the benefits of Acupuncture.”

HEALTH REPORT

VOLUME 11

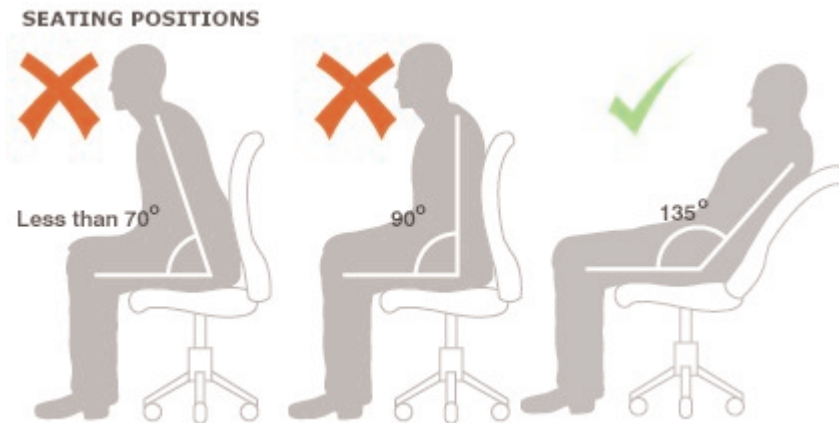
ISSUE 3

SITTING BACK MAY BE BETTER THAN SITTING UP!

Anyone who has ever been “yelled at” or reprimanded for poor posture for preferring a “slouching” position to sitting up straight may find something of interest in this most recent research into correct sitting.

Researchers in Aberdeen, Scotland, lead by a doctor working out of a Canadian hospital determined that the “slouching” position may actually be far better for the back and spine than the “sit up straight” position most of us learned in school. Dr. Waseem Bashir of the Department of Radiology and Diagnostic Imaging at the University of Alberta Hospital in Canada lead the study.

MRI studies were performed on 22 volunteers placed in three different sitting positions as shown here:



The MRIs were examined to measure spinal angles plus spinal disk height and movement across the different positions. It was determined that excessive disk movement indicated a potential for problems.

According to the findings, the relaxed position of 135 degrees was determined to be the best as it created the least amount of movement or stress. The 90 degree, upright position was proclaimed the worst. “Sitting in a sound anatomic position is essential since the strain put on the spine and its associated ligaments over time can lead to pain, deformity and chronic illness,” said Dr. Bashir.

“We are not created to sit down for long hours,” added Dr. Bashir. “But somehow modern life requires the vast majority of the global population to work in a seated position. This made our search for the optimal sitting position all the more important.”

HEALTH REPORT

VOLUME 11

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STUDY BOLSTERS ACUPUNCTURE'S POSITION AS A PROVIDER OF LOW BACK PAIN RELIEF

Acupuncture treatment for low back pain should receive a boost in popularity as more sufferers of the condition consider the results of a recently completed study in Germany. Acupuncture outperformed conventional therapy by a significant margin of more than 20 percent during the course of a 6-month treatment period in bringing relief to study participants.

The study involved 1,162 patients averaging 50 years in age who had suffered from low back pain for an average of 8 years. The subjects were divided into three different treatment groups. The first received traditional Chinese verum Acupuncture, (a form of standardized Acupuncture), the second group received sham (false) Acupuncture, and the third group received conventional therapy that consisted of a combination of medication, physical therapy and exercise. The results were published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

“Low back pain is a common, impairing and disabling condition, often long-term, with an estimated lifetime prevalence of 70 to 85 percent,” according to the authors of the study. “It is the second most common pain for which physician treatment is sought and a major reason for absenteeism and disability.” However, while Acupuncture is growing in use as an alternative therapy, its value for low back pain treatment is still controversial, according to the authors.

Michael Haake, Ph.D., M.D. of the University of Regensburg, Bad Abbach, Germany, was the study leader. He and colleagues divided the groups as follows: 387 verum Acupuncture, 367 sham Acupuncture, and 388 conventional therapies. Verum Acupuncture consisted of needling known Acupuncture points to a depth of between 5 and 40 millimeters based on traditional Chinese medicine. Sham Acupuncture needling depth was between 1 and 3 millimeters, avoiding all points and meridians. Conventional therapy included medication, exercise and physical therapy. Each session lasted about 30 minutes, and was done twice per week.

The finding of the study showed that Acupuncture outperformed conventional therapy by a wide margin. Most interestingly, the group that enjoyed the next highest amount of improvements was the sham Acupuncture group. As measured by study parameters, 47.6 percent in the verum Acupuncture group achieved a positive response. Next was a 44.2 percent response rate in the sham group, followed by only 27.4 percent improvement in the conventional therapy group.

“The superiority of both forms of Acupuncture suggests a common underlying mechanism that may act on pain generation, transmission of pain signals or processing of pain signals by the central nervous system and that is stronger than the action mechanism of conventional therapy,” the authors concluded. “Acupuncture gives physicians a promising and effective treatment option for chronic low back pain with few adverse effects. The improvements in all primary and secondary outcome measures were significant and lasted long after completion of treatment.”

HEALTH REPORT

VOLUME 10

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WHAT A RELIEF! ACUPRESSURE PROVEN TO HELP WITH LOW BACK PAIN

Patients seeking relief for low back pain would do well to consider Acupressure treatments instead of standard physical therapy applications. A recent test showed that Acupressure provided immediate relief as well as reduced levels of pain six months after the final treatment.

Researchers recruited 129 people with chronic low back pain (LBP) from a specialist orthopedic clinic as participants. The study was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Lisa Li-Chen Hsieh, a member of the Institute of Preventative Medicine at National Taiwan University in Taipei, Taiwan.

All test members were adult patients who had suffered from chronic LBP for a minimum of four months. Sixty-four patients were randomly assigned to receive Acupressure delivered at standard Acupuncture points. The remaining 65 patients were assigned to receive physical therapy that included spinal manipulation, electrical stimulation, infrared light therapy and exercise therapy. Each study participant received six sessions of either Acupressure or physical therapy delivered over a one-month period. A follow-up survey was done six months after the final treatment.

Acupressure treatment resulted in an 89 percent reduction in physical disability compared with physical therapy, the researchers reported. More specifically, patients who received Acupressure reported improvements in low back and leg pain, the most common types of pain that limit patients' ability to work or attend school.

For the millions of people who often turn to over-the-counter medications as their first defense against LBP, this study provides some excellent possibilities. Simple Acupressure procedures administered by qualified Acupuncture providers could provide both immediate and longer-term relief without the side effects of drugs.