

An article taken from the [Menopause & You](#) online program

Acupuncture and Menopause

There are women who, either for medical or personal reasons, don't use medication to assist them with the symptoms of the menopause transition. Acupuncture is gaining more acceptance by Western medicine and has been successfully used to treat conditions such as arthritis and chronic pain. Dr. Browngoehl discusses the use of acupuncture in the menopausal woman.

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Menopause is a time of natural change in a woman's body. Hormones and chemistry are shifting because of lower estrogen and progesterone produced by the body. For some women, these shifts in hormones can cause hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, and mood changes. It can be a challenging time. Today, there are many treatment options including medication and hormone replacement. Diet, exercise and good sleeping patterns can also be beneficial. Acupuncture is another treatment which many people may not know can be helpful to help treat many of the symptoms of menopause.

What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is a five thousand year old healing art which focuses on rebalancing the body. At menopause, there is said to be a decline in Jing which can be thought of as an important

essence which gives us energy. Chinese medicine recognizes that when Jing declines, our body becomes imbalanced and this is what leads to the various symptoms and signs of menopause. When Jing decreases around menopause, it sets up an imbalance between Yin and Yang. Yin can be thought of as a cooling system to the body and Yang as an energetic active system. We all need a balance between Yin and Yang. Many of the symptoms of menopause are caused by too much Yang. Excess Yang causes hot flashes, restlessness, mood swings, heart palpitations and insomnia. These imbalances can also cause water retention, cold hands and feet, weight gain, and swelling.

Research on the benefits of acupuncture

Researchers at Stanford University of Medicine studied the effect of acupuncture on postmenopausal women who experienced at least seven moderate to severe hot flashes daily. The study showed

that the severity of the hot flashes was significantly decreased in the women who received acupuncture as compared to a group of women getting placebo. At the University of Pittsburgh, acupuncture was studied in women with menopausal hot flashes, sleep disturbances and mood changes. One group of women was treated with specific acupuncture body points related to their menopausal symptoms. The other group received general acupuncture aimed to improve their overall well-being. In the group where acupuncture was targeting specific menopausal symptoms, the women showed a decrease in hot flashes and an improvement in sleep disturbances. Both groups showed improved mood changes. These studies as well as others suggest that acupuncture can be helpful in treatment of a variety of menopausal disturbances.

What happens during an acupuncture treatment?

If you have menopausal symptoms

Acupuncture can be very effective in supporting the essential energies of the body and allowing it to regain its balance.

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and are interested in acupuncture as a possible treatment, you may want to go to a physician who is trained in acupuncture. You can expect that the physician will initially perform a thorough evaluation and take a complete history. This is because it is important to determine what symptoms menopause has caused and in what ways the imbalance in hormones has affected you. A treatment plan using acupuncture can then be developed to address your individual concerns. A person who has hot flashes as her only symptom is treated differently than a person who no longer has hot flashes but experiences weight gain and depression. Each person experiences menopause differently and treatment will vary from one person to the next.

In an acupuncture treatment, small disposable needles are used at precise points to improve the body's balance and decrease symptoms of menopause. These points are generally located in the arms, legs and head. Acupuncture needles are very thin. The needles'

points are smooth and so most people do not feel pain or discomfort when the needle is placed. In fact, many people do not feel the needles being placed at all. Once the needles are placed, there is no soreness. Generally acupuncture needles will stay in place for fifteen to twenty minutes while you rest comfortably.

Effects from acupuncture can be felt immediately after treatment or might not be experienced for several days. Most people feel very relaxed after an acupuncture treatment and sleep especially well that evening. Generally, results are noted within about seventy-two hours. You will generally feel a better sense of well-being and a decrease in your troublesome symptoms. As you progress with acupuncture treatment, intensity and frequency of symptoms subside.

Acupuncture can be very effective in supporting the essential energies of the body and allowing it to regain its balance. The treatment encourages the body to promote natural healing

and improves functioning. Acupuncture provides another treatment option and can be a safe, natural and drug-free approach to addressing menopause.

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