

Some of my clients get acupuncture and swear by it, but does this help?

In the management of pain it seems it does, but how we do not know.

Acupuncture has been around for thousand of years. The over 5000 year old ice man had acupuncture tattoos. According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), there is limited evidence for its effectiveness in areas other than pain.

According to WebMed acupuncture -- in which needles, heat, pressure, and other treatments are applied to certain places on the skin -- has come a long way since 1971. That's when the 2,000-year-old Chinese healing art first caught on in the United States, thanks to a story in The New York Times. In 1996, the FDA gave acupuncture its first U.S. seal of approval, when it classified acupuncture needles as medical devices. In the 20 years since, study after study indicates that, yes, acupuncture can work. Acupuncture has long been recognized as an effective treatment for chronic pain. In 2012, a study found acupuncture was better than no acupuncture or simulated acupuncture for the treatment of four chronic pain conditions: According to many it may be one of the components of addressing the prescription drug epidemic that we're talking about in our country right now. It may help in cancer treatment. Many who get treatment for cancer get acupuncture in addition to standard cancer treatments like chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery.

Acupuncture can help people who have nausea and vomiting during treatment. Some research suggests acupuncture may help with pain from menstrual cramps. So far, though, that research is limited according to WebMed. The bottomline is no one fully understands how acupuncture works, but it seems it does in certain cases. Does it boost our body's painkilling ability, affect your blood flow, is it a distraction, does it work through the gate theory of pain where pressure overrides pain, or does it work on decreasing depression?

According to WebMed scientists continue to study -- and debate -- the issues. There is no scientific proof that the meridians or acupuncture points exist which are tenets of acupuncture, and it is hard to prove that they either do or do not according to MNT. **Harvard Health paints a different picture suggesting the evidence is mixed they suggest, with some studies showing that acupuncture relieves pain and others showing that it works no better than "sham" acupuncture or "sugar pill," used in medication studies. See their comments.**

According to WebMed acupuncture can be dangerous if you take certain medications, have a pacemaker, are at risk of infection, have chronic skin problems, or are pregnant. Talk to your doctor before you jump in.

The NCCIH note that it has been proven to help in cases of:

- low back pain
- neck pain
- osteoarthritis
- knee pain
- headache and migraine

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