

Acupuncture Reduces Menopausal Symptoms.

Source: Acupuncture Medicine

By definition, menopause is the transition period between the reproductive years of a woman's life and the cessation of ovarian function. Unless brought about by surgery or other causes, natural changes in a woman's body generally occur between the ages of 35 and 50. It is during perimenopause that most of the symptoms associated with the term menopause are experienced. During the three to five year period before the cessation of menstrual cycles, there is a decrease in the production of estrogen. This period of perimenopause brings on a variety of symptoms that are often very inconsistent. Menopausal symptoms are unique to each individual, both in duration and in intensity. Some of these would be: hot flashes, insomnia, mild to moderate depression, joint and muscle pain, water retention, heart palpitations, headaches, vaginal dryness and increased sweating.

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese practice that involves piercing strategic points on the body with needles. This is a relatively painless procedure and is performed by a licensed acupuncturist. While this practice has been used in China for over 2,000 years, its use in the United States is relatively new. Acupuncture is one element of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which includes other modalities such as herbal therapies and massage. It is difficult for people born and raised in a culture like the United States to understand how Traditional Chinese Medicine works because it is a complex and complicated medical system that uses theories and practices that Westerners are not used to. For this reason, acceptance by the medical profession has been slow. However, consistent reports of success using acupuncture for specific purposes have gained attention. One of these purposes involves helping ease side effects of radiation in cancer.

A recent study published in the journal *Acupuncture in Medicine* investigated whether acupuncture could be effective in treating menopausal symptoms and whether this effect was related to changes in hormone levels. Scientists enrolled 53 postmenopausal women who were alternately assigned into two groups. One group received traditional Chinese acupuncture while the other group received sham acupuncture twice a week for 10 weeks. The results were the women given the traditional acupuncture had significantly lower Menopause Rating Scale (MRS) and lower somatic and psychological scores. There was also a significant decrease in the severity of hot flashes in the traditional acupuncture group compared to the sham acupuncture group. There was little evidence to suggest that any hormone fluctuations were responsible for the changes in symptom severity. The scientists concluded that traditional acupuncture was effective in reducing menopausal symptoms and could be considered as an alternative therapy for treating menopausal symptoms.¹

1 Sunday D, Ozdiken M, Arslan H, et al. The effect of acupuncture on postmenopausal symptoms and reproductive hormones: a sham controlled clinical trial. *Acupunct Med.* 2011;29(1):27-31.