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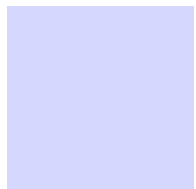
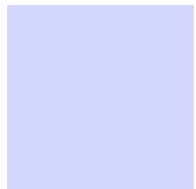
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Acupuncture May Safely Treat Morning Sickness

Excerpt By Charnicia E. Huggins , Reuters Health

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Acupuncture may be an effective treatment for some symptoms of morning sickness during early pregnancy, new study results suggest.

"The use of acupuncture in early pregnancy will reduce or resolve symptoms of nausea and dry retching earlier than simply waiting for them to improve with time," lead study author Dr. Caroline Smith of Adelaide University in Australia told Reuters Health.

Smith and her colleagues studied 593 women who were all less than 14 weeks pregnant and suffered from frequent nausea and vomiting. The women were randomly divided into four study groups.

One group received traditional acupuncture, in which needles were inserted into a variety of acupuncture points on the forearm or abdomen, while another received p6 acupuncture, in which needles were inserted at one specific pressure point (p6) traditionally associated with nausea and vomiting.

The third group received "sham" acupuncture, in which needles were inserted near, but not on, acupuncture points; and the last group was a "control" group that did not receive acupuncture.

Acupuncture was given five times during the 4-week study period--twice during the first week, and once per week during subsequent weeks.

At the end of the first week, women who received traditional acupuncture reportedly experienced less frequent nausea and shorter periods of nausea than did their peers in the control group, the investigators report in the March issue of the journal *Birth*. Their improved nausea symptoms persisted throughout each weekly follow-up.

The p6 acupuncture group reported less nausea than the controls at the end of the second week and into the third and fourth weeks, while the sham group reported improvements at the third and fourth week follow-ups.

Dry retching symptoms, in contrast, did not improve until the second week, and then only in the traditional acupuncture group, who reported fewer periods of dry retching and less distress from dry retching than did their peers. By the end of the third week, both the p6 and the sham acupuncture groups also reported greater improvements in dry retching in comparison to their peers in the control group.

Acupuncture did not seem to affect vomiting, but it did influence the women's overall health status, particularly among those that received traditional acupuncture, study findings indicate.

For example, women who received traditional acupuncture reported greater improvements in vitality, social and physical function, mental health and emotion at the end of the study period than did their peers in the control group. Their vitality scores were also higher than those reported by the p6 or sham acupuncture groups.

In light of the findings, "acupuncture can be considered an effective non-pharmacological treatment option for women who experience nausea and dry retching and should be promoted and offered to women," Smith said.

Because no adverse effects were noted in follow-ups conducted after the women gave birth, "we consider acupuncture to be a safe and effective treatment option for women," the researcher added.

SOURCE: Birth 2002;29.

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