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POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER Factsheet

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What is acupuncture?

Acupuncture is practiced as an accepted health care model in China, Korea and Japan. Traditionally, it involves the stimulation of specific points (acupoints) by inserting needles into the skin. Electro-acupuncture is similar in that the same points are stimulated during treatment with needles inserted on specific points along the body. Electro-acupuncture uses two needles at a time with the needles attached to an electrical device that generates continuous electric pulses that pass from one needle to the other with varying frequency and intensity dictated by the condition. Administration is usually for no more than 30 minutes at a time. Laser acupuncture is essentially the same except that a laser is used instead of needles. Moxibustion is a technique by which either heat from burning a specific herb (artemisia vulgaris) or an electric source is used to stimulate specific points or areas of the body. One of the challenges in performing efficacy trials of acupuncture is that it is difficult to provide a control condition. Sham methods that have been used include needling the wrong points or with very superficial technique or using a simulation of laser acupuncture without full stimulation.

What is the evidence for the effectiveness of acupuncture in people with PTSD?

Moderate to low quality evidence found improvements in PTSD symptoms and some improvement in depression symptoms and functioning following needle acupuncture (30 to 60 minutes per session, 2 to 4 sessions per week over 3 to 12 weeks). There were no improvements in anxiety, sleep, or quality of life. Some participants experienced minor to moderate pain, superficial bleeding, and hematoma at needle insertion sites.

For more information see the technical table



NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about PTSD and its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at neura.edu.au/donate