

NIH/WHO Opinion

- [The NIH Consensus Statement on Acupuncture](#)
- [The World Health Organization Viewpoint on Acupuncture](#) (including an alphabetical listing of conditions)

The NIH Consensus Statement on Acupuncture

In 1997 the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) published a consensus statement on the use and effectiveness of acupuncture for a variety of conditions.

Acupuncture as a therapeutic intervention is widely practiced in the United States. While there have been many studies of its potential usefulness, many of these studies provide equivocal results because of design, sample size, and other factors. The issue is further complicated by inherent difficulties in the use of appropriate controls, such as placebos and sham acupuncture groups. However, promising results have emerged, for example, showing efficacy of acupuncture in adult post-operative and chemotherapy nausea and vomiting and in post-operative dental pain. There are other situations such as addiction, stroke rehabilitation, headache, menstrual cramps, tennis elbow, fibromyalgia, myofascial pain, osteoarthritis, low back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and asthma where acupuncture may be useful as an adjunct treatment or an acceptable alternative or be included in a comprehensive management program. Further research is likely to uncover additional areas where acupuncture interventions will be useful. ¹

[View the full consensus statement.](#)

NIH Opinion Summary

Acupuncture has been proven effective for:

- Low back pain
- Nausea following surgery or chemotherapy, and probably for nausea of pregnancy
- Dental pain following procedures
- Stroke rehabilitation
- Headache
- Menstrual cramps

Acupuncture was felt to be no less effective than other treatments with higher side effects, in the management of musculoskeletal conditions including:

- Tennis elbow
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Fibromyalgia

In conjunction with other management, acupuncture was also endorsed in the treatment of:

- Asthma
- Addiction

The World Health Organization

In the hands of a well-trained practitioner, acupuncture has much broader applications beyond pain relief. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the use of acupuncture in the treatment of a wide range of common illnesses including:²

<p>Upper Respiratory Tract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Acute sinusitis- Acute rhinitis- Common cold and flu- Acute tonsillitis <p>Respiratory System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Acute bronchitis- Bronchial asthma (most effective in children and uncomplicated conditions.) <p>Eye Disorders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Acute conjunctivitis- Central retinitis myopia (in children)- Cataracts (without complications) <p>Mouth Disorders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Toothache- Post extraction pain- Gingivitis- Acute and chronic pharyngitis <p>Gastrointestinal Disorders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Spasms of esophagus- Hiccough- Gastroptosis- Acute and chronic gastritis- Gastric hyperacidity- Chronic duodenal ulcer (pain relief)- Acute duodenal ulcer (without complications)- Acute and chronic colitis- Acute bacillary dysentery- Constipation- Diarrhea- Paralytic Ileus	<p>Neurologic and Musculoskeletal Disorders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Headache and migraine- Trigeminal neuralgias- Facial palsy (early stage, i.e., within 3-6 months)- Pareses following a stroke- Peripheral neuropathies- Sequelae of poliomyelitis (early stage, i.e., within 6 months)- Meniere's disease- Neurogenic bladder dysfunction- Nocturnal enuresis (bedwetting)- Intercostal neuralgia- Cervicobrachial syndrome- Frozen shoulder- Tennis elbow- Sciatica- Low back pain- Osteoarthritis- Carpal tunnel syndrome- Back and knee Pain- Fibromyalgia- Chronic fatigue- Sports Injuries and pains <p>Reproductive & Gynecological Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Premenstrual syndrome- Dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps)- Spotting and excessive bleeding- Amenorrhea (loss of menstrual period)- Impotence- Infertility- Incontinence- Prostatitis <p>Mental Emotional Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Stress- Anxiety- Depression- Insomnia
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The World Health Organization Interregional Seminar compiled the above list of illnesses that may benefit from acupuncture treatment. The list is only a partial list and is based on clinical experience, but not necessarily on controlled clinical research. The inclusion of specific diseases is not meant to indicate the extent of acupuncture's efficacy in treatment, since all conditions may vary in severity and response.

Sources:

1. NIH, *Acupuncture*, Nov. 3-5, 1997, Vol. 15, No. 5

2. World Health Organization. *Viewpoint on Acupuncture*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 1979