

Is acupuncture an effective treatment for overactive bladder?

Clinical Question	Is acupuncture effective and safe for treating overactive bladder in adults?
Bottom Line	<p>Care providers and patients may wish to consider the use of acupuncture to treat overactive bladder symptoms where other treatment modalities are unsuccessful, carry a significant risk of side effects or are considered undesirable by the patient.</p> <p>One trial compared acupuncture with no treatment and suggested that acupuncture may improve symptoms of overactive bladder. But an additional five studies that compared acupuncture to sham acupuncture suggests that acupuncture results in little to no difference in cure or improvement in overactive bladder symptoms.</p> <p>Eleven studies compared acupuncture with medications for symptoms of overactive bladder and these suggested acupuncture may result in a slight increase in cure or improvement in overactive bladder symptoms compared to medication.</p> <p>There were no reports of major adverse events in any of the included studies. Compared to sham acupuncture there was a slight increase in minor adverse events but compared to medications there were significantly less minor adverse events recorded.</p>
Caveat	There were a wide variety of acupuncture techniques, treatment regimens, comparators used, lengths of follow-up, outcomes used for measuring efficacy and ways in which outcome data were reported. This led to difficulty in pooling the data to answer the question of whether acupuncture is an effective treatment for overactive bladder in adults. In addition most included studies had small numbers of participants.
Context	Overactive bladder is a common, long-term symptom complex, which includes frequency of micturition, urgency with or without associated incontinence and nocturia. Around 11% of the population have symptoms, with this figure increasing with age. Symptoms can be linked to social anxiety and adaptive behavioural change. The cost of treating overactive bladder is considerable, with current treatments varying in effectiveness and being associated with side effects. Acupuncture has been suggested as an alternative treatment.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Hargreaves E, Baker K, Barry G, Harding C, Zhang Y, Kandala N-B, Zhang X, Kernohan A, Clarkson CE. Acupuncture for treating overactive bladder in adults. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2022, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD013519. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD013519.pub2. This review contains 15 trials with a total of 1395 participants.

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD013519.pub2/full>