

**Does acupuncture help chronic low back pain?**

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| <b>Clinical Question</b>          | What are the effects of acupuncture compared to sham intervention, no treatment, or usual care for chronic nonspecific low back pain (LBP)?   |
| <b>Bottom Line</b>                | <p>Moderate-certainty evidence showed that acupuncture provided a clinically significant level of immediate pain relief when compared to no treatment for people with persistent pain. However, when acupuncture was compared to sham acupuncture or usual treatment although still generating a statistically significant difference, low certainty evidence showed the reduction in pain was not enough to be considered clinically significant.</p> <p>The incidence of adverse events was generally similar between acupuncture and sham or usual care. Therefore, acupuncture might be a safe treatment for people with chronic LBP.</p> <p>In clinical practice, the decision to use acupuncture to treat chronic LBP may depend on treatment availability, cost, and, importantly, participant or provider preference.</p> |
| <b>Caveat</b>                     | None of the included studies guaranteed that participants or acupuncturists had been blinded successfully, and all of the primary outcomes were self-reported. Therefore, none of the evidence was high certainty. Quality was further compromised by a combination of a high risk of bias for co-interventions, unequal or high dropout rates, the failure to use intention-to-treat analyses, inconsistency, and imprecision.   |
| <b>Context</b>                    | Chronic nonspecific LBP is very common and is defined as pain without a recognizable aetiology that lasts for more than three months. Some clinical practice guidelines suggest that acupuncture can offer an effective alternative therapy.  |
| <b>Cochrane Systematic Review</b> | Mu J, Furlan AD, Lam WY, Hsu MY, Ning Z, Lao L. Acupuncture for chronic nonspecific low back pain. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2020, Issue 12. Art. No.: CD013814. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD013814. This review contains 33 trials with a total of 8270 participants.  |

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD013814/full>