

Efficacy of acupuncture for chronic constipation: a systematic review.

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Abstract

This study was to evaluate the efficacy and safety of acupuncture for chronic functional constipation. Randomized controlled trials were searched in several databases. The primary outcome was a change in the number of weekly spontaneous bowel movements. The secondary outcomes included colonic transit activity, effective rate, Cleveland Clinic Score, and health-related quality of life score. Meta-analysis was done by using RevMan 5.1. After strict screening, 15 RCTs were included, containing 1256 participants. All of them were conducted in China and published in Chinese journals. Meta-analysis indicated that acupuncture for chronic functional constipation was probably as effective as conventional medical therapy in the change of bowel movements. For the colonic transit activity, acupuncture might be the same as conventional medical therapy and could be better than sham acupuncture. For the Cleveland Clinic Score, acupuncture was unlikely inferior to conventional medical therapy and the deep acupuncture was better than normal depth acupuncture in abdominal region. No obvious adverse event was associated with acupuncture for constipation.

In conclusion, acupuncture for chronic functional constipation is safe and may improve weekly spontaneous bowel movements, quality of life, and relevant symptoms. However, the evidence was limited by the small sample size and the methodological quality.

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