

Acupuncture for Nausea and Vomiting

What is nausea? What causes it? Who suffers from it?

Nausea is the sensation that leads a person to have the urge to vomit. Nausea may be caused by a variety of factors, including migraine headaches, allergies, excessive alcohol consumption, and food poisoning.

Although most everyone feels nauseous at one time or another, the feeling is most commonly experienced by infants, young children and pregnant women. Pregnant women often suffer nausea as a symptom of morning sickness. Cancer patients sometimes experience nausea as a side effect of chemotherapy.

The biggest concern related to vomiting is dehydration, a loss of bodily fluids. The rate at which dehydration can occur depends on several factors, including the height and weight of the person, the rate at which the person vomits, and whether or not diarrhea is also present. Whatever the cause, it is important that people who have vomited consume as much fluid as possible without further upsetting the stomach.

What can acupuncture do for nausea and vomiting?

To date, more than three dozen randomized controlled studies have been published showing that acupuncture point stimulation can treat or prevent nausea and vomiting.

While most acupuncture treatments are tailored to individual patients and are highly dependent on practitioner preference points, most acupuncturists and doctors of Oriental medicine appear to prefer using the P6 or *Neiguan* point, which is located two *cun* below the distal wrist crease on a patient's lower arm. (A *cun* is a Chinese measurement equaling the width of the middle joint of the patient's thumb; two *cun* equals approximately the width of three fingers.)

Acupressure has also been employed to relieve the symptoms of nausea and vomiting, sometimes in conjunction with acupuncture, sometimes as a stand-alone therapy. Many practitioners prescribe acupressure bracelets, which apply pressure to certain points without the use of needles. And because the P6 point is easy to reach, many patients can be instructed to apply acupressure themselves to help reduce nausea.

References

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