

## Acupuncture: Relief for Arthritis in the Knee

**Acupuncture can help the pain of arthritis in the knee and can improve freedom of movement, U.S. researchers reported.**



The study adds to evidence that the 2,000-year-old Chinese treatment, which uses needles placed at specific points on the body, can help a range of health problems, including nausea.

“For the first time, a clinical trial with sufficient rigor, size, and duration has shown that acupuncture reduces the pain and functional impairment of osteoarthritis of the knee,” said Dr. Stephen Straus, director of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, which helped fund the study.

“These results also indicate that acupuncture can serve as an effective addition to a standard regimen of care and improve quality of life for knee osteoarthritis sufferers.” Writing in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Dr. Brian Berman of the University of Maryland School of Medicine and colleagues across the country said they studied 570 patients aged 50 or older with osteoarthritis of the knee.

They all had significant pain but had never tried acupuncture, had not had knee surgery in the previous six months, and had not used steroids or similar injections.

### **Decrease in pain, increase in function**

With either regular acupuncture treatments, sham acupuncture, or a self-help course for managing pain. Everyone also continued to receive standard medical care, including anti-inflammatory drugs and pain relievers. By the end of the second month, patients who received acupuncture had a significant increase in function and by the 14th week they had significant reduction of pain, compared to the other two groups, the researchers said.

The volunteers given true acupuncture had 40 percent less pain and a nearly 40 percent improvement in function over the course of the study.

“More than 20 million Americans have osteoarthritis. This disease is one of the most frequent causes of physical disability among adults,” said Dr. Stephen Katz, director of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, which also funded the study.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says acupuncture was used by an estimated 2.1 million U.S. adults in 2002.

