A randomized controlled pilot study of acupuncture for postmenopausal hot flashes: effect on nocturnal hot flashes and sleep quality

**Conclusions:** Acupuncture significantly reduced the severity of nocturnal hot flashes compared with placebo. Given the strength of correlations between improvements in sleep and reductions in nocturnal hot flashes, further exploration is merited.

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**Objective:**
To assess the effectiveness of acupuncture on postmenopausal nocturnal hot flashes and sleep.

**Design:**
Prospective randomized placebo-controlled study.

**Setting:**
Stanford University School of Medicine and private acupuncture offices.

**Interventions:**
Active or placebo acupuncture was administered for nine sessions over seven weeks.

**Main Outcome Measures:**
Severity and frequency of nocturnal hot flashes from daily diaries and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI).

**Patients:**
Twenty-nine postmenopausal women experiencing at least seven moderate to severe hot flashes daily, with E2 <18 pg/mL and FSH 30.0–110.0 IU/L.

**Results:**
Nocturnal hot-flash severity significantly decreased in the active acupuncture group (28%) compared with the placebo group (6%), P=.017. The frequency of nocturnal hot flashes also decreased in the active group (47%, P=.001), though it was not significantly different from the placebo group (24%, P=.170; effect size = 0.65). Treatment did not differentially influence sleep; however, correlations between improvements in PSQI and reductions in nocturnal hot flash severity and frequency were significant (P<.026).

**Conclusions:**
Acupuncture significantly reduced the severity of nocturnal hot flashes compared with placebo.
Given the strength of correlations between improvements in sleep and reductions in nocturnal hot flashes, further exploration is merited.

**Key Words:**

Acupuncture, hot flashes, hot flushes, night sweats, ostmenopause, menopause, sleep, insomnia

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