

Acupressure Treats Dysmenorrhea

Editorial Staff

Dysmenorrhea, which can be quite common in women, is characterized by lower abdominal pain and cramping, sometimes accompanied by heavy bleeding, that begins at the start of the menstrual cycle. Studies have estimated that the prevalence of women who suffer from dysmenorrhea can range from 28 percent to as high as 72 percent.^{1,2} Now, a new study has found that a simple acupressure technique may help relieve symptoms.³

A group of Iranian researchers randomly divided 172 university students with dysmenorrhea into two groups. One group received an acupressure treatment at the *Tai Chong* point on the foot and the other received acupressure at a sham point. The students were not told which group they were in.

During the first menstrual cycle of treatment, all subjects were given information about the acupressure protocol and filled out a symptom questionnaire. They were then shown how to administer the acupressure protocol themselves. At the second-cycle session, the acupressure, alternated with massage of the point was applied. Each treatment lasted for 20 minutes. The subjects were asked to perform the acupressure treatment themselves three to seven days before their next two menstrual cycles. Once the fourth menstrual cycle started, they were asked to evaluate the level of their dysmenorrhea symptoms.

For those subjects who received acupressure at the *Tai Chong*, the number of subjects who stated that they were not affected by symptoms (both in terms of pain severity and lost work time) went from 20 (23 percent) to 48 (55 percent). At the other end of the scale, 14 subjects 16 percent) reported the most severe symptoms at the beginning of the study. By the end of the study, none reported having the most severe symptoms. As the researchers explained, "In other words, in the group in which the acupressure protocol was applied to the *Tai Chong* point, rather than an arbitrary point, the number of participants with the most severe dysmenorrhea decreased and the number of participants with the least severe dysmenorrhea increased over three menstrual cycles." As they concluded, "Applying acupressure to the *Tai Chong* point not only decreased pain and physical symptoms of our study group participants, but also decreased the social and economic consequences of their having dysmenorrhea."

References

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