

Acupuncture and Massage for Cancer Pain

Nonpharmacologic pain relief options for people with advanced cancer.

March 11, 2024 By [Liz Highleyman](#)

Both acupuncture and massage therapy show promise as nonpharmacologic pain relief options for people with advanced cancer. The Integrative Medicine for Pain in Patients with Advanced Cancer Trial (IMPACT) enrolled 298 adults with cancer who experienced moderate to severe pain. They were randomly assigned to weekly 30-minute acupuncture or massage therapy sessions for 10 weeks with monthly “booster” sessions through 26 weeks.

At that point, worst pain scores fell by 2.53 points in the acupuncture group and 3.01 points in the massage group on a scale of 0 to 10. What’s more, 28% and 36% of patients in the respective groups were able to reduce their use of opioid pain relievers. Participants in both groups reported improvements in fatigue, insomnia and quality of life. Andrew Epstein, MD, of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and colleagues cautioned that acupuncture and massage don’t replace pain drugs, but they can improve symptoms while potentially reducing medication use. They added that Medicare coverage of acupuncture and massage “is needed to promote equitable and effective pain management for patients with cancer.”

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<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/acupuncture-massage-pain>