

Acupuncture fights morning sickness

Acupuncture is becoming popular among GPs

Acupuncture helps relieve morning sickness for pregnant women, a study shows.

It is hoped the findings will give wider recognition of the medical benefits of the ancient Chinese art. The research follows a previous study which showed acupuncture's success in treating sickness in women recovering from breast surgery, including mastectomies.

"Our results have shown that as little as one acupuncture treatment can significantly change the way these women feel," said research co-ordinator Dr Caroline Smith. The study involved nearly 600 women who were less than 14 weeks pregnant with symptoms of nausea or vomiting. They were given weekly 20-minute sessions of acupuncture for four weeks.

About 50-80% of all pregnant women experience nausea or vomiting in early pregnancy, which can be severely debilitating.

Dr Smith, from the Women's and Children's Hospital and Adelaide University said: "We found that traditional acupuncture reduced nausea throughout the trial with dry retching being reduced from the second week." "Women now have an additional option to manage their morning sickness. "I hope this exciting evidence that complementary therapy does work, will open up new opportunities for funding future research in women's health."

Acupuncture on NHS

The British Medical Acupuncture Society (BMAS) says previous research indicates nausea and vomiting respond well to this type of therapy.

Dr Richard Halvorsen from the BMAS is a GP who uses acupuncture at his London surgery to complement traditional medicine. He said: "I'm an NHS GP and I use acupuncture in every day practice and I have treated several women experiencing morning sickness with acupuncture to good effect." "I like to practice combining conventional and complementary medicine. "I like to look at things holistically and decide what is best for the patient." Dr Halvorsen administers acupuncture to his patients on the NHS.

He says GPs are becoming increasingly interested in acupuncture and about 600 doctors a year are being trained how to use it by the BMAS. Acupuncture is used to treat a range of painful problems, including back pain, migraine prevention and arthritis.

Practitioners say it offers a drug-free alternative to treat some medical conditions. Results of the Australian study are published in the American journal Birth.