

# Acupuncture for Stroke

A stroke is the number two cause of death worldwide. It is a Medical Emergency and can cause permanent Neurological Damage, Complications and even Death. It is the leading cause of adult disability in the United States and Europe. Stroke is the loss of the brain functions due to the disturbance of the blood vessels supplying blood to the brain. As a result the affected area of the brain is unable to function, leading to inability to move one or more limbs on one side of the body, to see one side of the visual field, inability to understand or to formulate.



Risk Factors for stroke include Advance Age, Hypertension (high blood pressure), previous stroke or Transient Ischemic Attack , Diabetes, High Cholesterol, Cigarette Smoking and Atrial Fibrillation.

Acupuncture therapy for Stroke-caused conditions such as Paralysis, Speech, Swallowing problems, Depression is one of the main modalities commonly used in Europe and the Orient.

It would be recommended to start therapy as soon as possible after a stroke however a delay of 2 weeks for strokes caused by bleeding in the brain, (10 to 20% of strokes, instead of the usual blood vessel block or clot) is recommended. The wait is due to studies showing that acupuncture opens blood vessels for better flow and decreases clotting and inflammation. These effects are desired early when arteries are blocked, but after a stroke caused by bleeding has occurred, it is safer to wait until the bleeding blood vessel has clotted and is unlikely to bleed further before providing the acupuncture.

Acupuncture is done on a daily basis in Europe and Orient for the stroke patients. However treating stroke with acupuncture 3 times a week is acceptable and effective.

Does acupuncture really work to help stroke victims improve?

Many studies involving thousands of patients have been published in China and Japan, and 2 of 3 studies from Scandinavia, demonstrated significant help. These studies indicate that patients get well faster, perform better in self-care, require less nursing and rehabilitation therapy, and use less health care dollars.

Acupuncture is a safe therapy, and this is especially true when helping stroke victims. Discomfort is generally very minimal. If one compares the possible positive help to be obtained acupuncture is worthy to attempt for stroke therapy.

Adding acupuncture to rehabilitation therapy obviously increases the cost; daily-to-3 times-weekly treatment is needed for 12 weeks or longer. Concern for added cost would perhaps disappear if the end result demonstrates more self-care and less dependence on family and health providers. In the addition most of the PPO insurance carriers provide coverage for the acupuncture treatments.

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