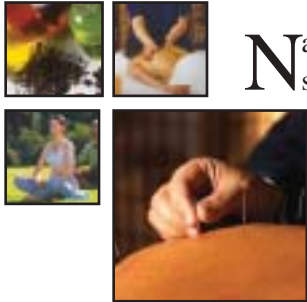




Acupuncture for... Nausea and Vomiting

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Nausea and vomiting are common symptoms in clinical practice. Conventional medications do not always control these problems and often have considerable side-effects.

In their 1997 multidisciplinary consensus conference, the National Institutes of Health felt there was some evidence of acupuncture's effectiveness for post-operative and chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting.

In acupuncture, it is often important to use multiple points to treat any given symptom complex and the insertion of the needles requires some degree of training. One point, called Pericardium 6 (P6), is located two thumb widths above the wrist crease in the midline between the tendons of flexor carpi radialis and palmaris longus (Figure 1). This point, when needled by itself, will often relieve nausea and vomiting.

Controlling nausea and vomiting in pregnancy

In one study, 230 pregnant women with mild to severe vomiting at six to 12 weeks of gestation were randomly assigned to receive a device for nerve stimulation

What do the studies say for post-operative nausea and vomiting?

1. Lee, et al.

- A systemic review of 26 trials.
- Found significant reductions in the risks of nausea, vomiting and the need for rescue antiemetics in the P6 stimulation point, compared with sham treatments.¹

2. Alkaissi, et al.

- A study of 410 women undergoing gynecologic surgery.
- Found significant reduction of post-operative nausea and vomiting in those who were given bilateral P6 acupressure after surgery, compared to sham treatment and controls.²

3. Wang, et al.

- A randomly assigned, double-blind, placebo-controlled study.
- Involved 187 children aged seven to 16.
- Children were injected with 0.2 mL of glucose solution with a 1 mL tuberculin syringe vertically to a depth of 5 mm to 7 mm in the P6 acupoint before the conclusion of surgery.
- P6 injections were found to be as effective as droperidol in controlling early, post-operative nausea and vomiting.
- Author concluded P6-related techniques should be incorporated in the curriculum of anesthesia residency programs because the technique is simple to learn and is a low-cost procedure with few side-effects.³

therapy of P6 or an otherwise identical, but non-stimulating placebo device.

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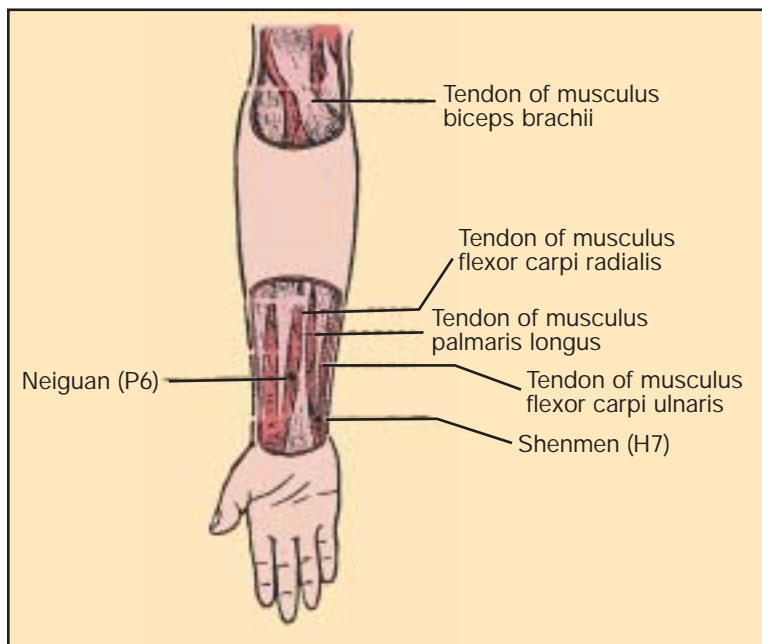


Figure 1. Schematic diagram of arm showing P6 (two thumb widths proximal to the distal wrist crease).

There was a significant reduction in nausea and vomiting and more weight gain in the group who used the nerve stimulation device over P6, compared to controls.⁴

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have stated P6 stimulation is a safe treatment for the relief of nausea and vomiting in pregnancy.


Controlling nausea after chemotherapy

Many cancer patients continue to experience nausea and vomiting when undergoing chemotherapy treatments, even with preventative medications. There is evidence that stimulation of the P6 acupoint can help relieve these symptoms.⁵

What are the side-effects?

Occasionally, mild pain, minimal bleeding or bruising can result at needle insertion points. Serious infections, like acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and hepatitis B and C, have been spread through improper sterilization.

Most practitioners use disposable needles, while some use expensive electric and laser acupuncture. However, because there is often no regulation of practitioners, proper hygiene is sometimes overlooked.

Advise patients to be careful when choosing an acupuncturist and to select someone who uses disposable needles. 

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