



Natural Standard

The Authority on Integrative Medicine

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TENS, Acupuncture for Pain Relief in Childbirth



The application of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) on specific acupuncture points may provide pain relief for labor and delivery, a new study suggests.

TENS is a non-invasive technique in which a low-voltage electrical current is delivered through wires from a small power unit to electrodes located on the skin. Electrodes are temporarily attached with paste in various patterns, depending on the specific condition and treatment

goals. TENS is often used to treat pain, as an alternative or addition to pain medications. Therapy sessions may last from minutes to hours.

Researchers at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital and Chang Gung University College of Medicine in Taiwan investigated the efficacy and safety of TENS on specific acupuncture points for reducing pain in the first stage of labor.

In this double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, researchers randomly assigned healthy, full-term expecting women in the active phase of first-stage labor to TENS on four acupuncture points. Visual analogue scale (VAS) was used to assess pain before treatment and 30 and 60 minutes after treatment.

A questionnaire was given 24 hours after giving birth to evaluate the satisfaction of the pain relieving method and the willingness to have the same treatment again. Mode of delivery and neonatal effect were measured as secondary outcomes. One hundred women were eligible for analysis.

The study found that the TENS group experienced a greater reduction in pain than the placebo group. Willingness of using the same analgesic method for a future childbirth was also significantly different (TENS 96 percent vs placebo 66 percent). Operative delivery was increased in the TENS group (24 percent vs 8 percent), but the neonatal outcomes were not different.

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Researchers concluded that the application of TENS on specific acupuncture points could be a non-invasive adjunct for pain relief in the first stage of labor.

For more information on TENS, please visit [Natural Standard's Health & Wellness](#) database.

Reference: 1) Chao AS, Chao A, Wang TH, et al. Pain relief by applying transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) on acupuncture points during the first stage of labor: a randomized double-blind placebo-controlled trial. *Pain*. 2007 Feb;127(3):214-20. [View Abstract](#).

Garlic: Crush it for Greater Health Benefits



Crushing fresh garlic may increase the health benefits of the herb by preserving its healthy compounds during cooking, a new study suggests.

Argentinean researchers along with scientists from the University of Wisconsin explained that the raw form of garlic and some of its preparations are widely recognized as antiplatelet (blood clot inhibiting) agents that may contribute to the prevention of cardiovascular disease.

The study examined the *in-vitro* antiaggregatory activity (IVAA) of human blood platelets induced by extracts of garlic samples that were previously heated (in the form of crushed versus uncrushed cloves) using different cooking methods and intensities. The concentrations of allicin and pyruvate, two predictors of antiplatelet strength, were also monitored.

The study found that oven-heating at 200 degrees Celsius (400 degrees Fahrenheit) or immersing in boiling water for three minutes or less did not affect the ability of garlic to inhibit platelet aggregation (as compared to raw garlic), whereas heating for six minutes completely suppressed IVAA in uncrushed, but not in previously crushed, samples. The latter samples had reduced, yet significant, antiplatelet activity.

Prolonged incubation (more than 10 minutes) at these temperatures completely suppressed IVAA. Microwaved garlic had no effect on platelet aggregation. However, increasing the concentration of garlic juice in the aggregation reaction had a positive IVAA dose response in crushed, but not in uncrushed, microwaved samples.

The addition of raw garlic juice to microwaved uncrushed garlic restored a full complement of antiplatelet activity that was completely lost without the garlic addition. Garlic-induced IVAA was always associated with allicin and pyruvate levels.

Researchers concluded that allicin and thiosulfates are responsible for the IVAA response; crushing garlic before moderate cooking may reduce the loss of activity; and the partial loss of antithrombotic effect in crushed-cooked garlic may be compensated by increasing the amount consumed.

For more information on the health benefits of garlic, please visit [Natural Standard's Herbs & Supplements](#) database.

Reference: 1) Cavagnaro PF, Camargo A, Galmarini CR, et al. Effect of Cooking on Garlic (*Allium sativum* L.) Antiplatelet Activity and Thiosulfinates Content. *J Agric Food Chem.* 2007 Feb 21;55(4):1280-1288. Epub 2007 Jan 27. [View Abstract](#).

CAM Solutions for Work Stress

Alternative stress relief techniques, such as cognitive and relaxation therapies, may help alleviate some of the symptoms and help protect against work stress-induced hypertension (high blood pressure), a new study reports.

Researchers at the University of Milan in Italy explained that work stress may increase cardiovascular risk either indirectly, by inducing unhealthy life styles, or directly, by affecting the autonomic nervous system and arterial pressure.

Researchers hypothesized that, before any apparent sign of disease, work-related stress is already accompanied by alterations of RR (relative risk) variability profile and that a simple onsite stress management program based on cognitive restructuring and relaxation training could reduce the level of stress symptoms, revert stress-related autonomic nervous system dysregulation and lower arterial pressure.



The study compared 91 white-collar workers, enrolled at a time of work downsizing (a stress condition), with 79 healthy control subjects. Psychological profiles were assessed by questionnaires and autonomic nervous system regulation by spectral analysis of RR variability.

A simple onsite stress management program (cognitive restructuring and relaxation training) was tested in a subgroup of workers compared with a sham subgroup (sham program).

The study found that workers presented an elevated level of stress-related symptoms and an altered variability profile as compared with control subjects and these alterations were largely lowered by the stress management program, which also slightly lowered systolic arterial pressure. No changes were observed in the sham program group.

Researchers concluded that work stress is associated with unpleasant symptoms and with an altered autonomic profile. A stress management program integrating cognitive and relaxation therapy techniques may have preventive advantages for hypertension.

For more information on relaxation and cognitive therapies, please visit [Natural Standard's Health & Wellness](#) database.

Reference: 1) Lucini D, Riva S, Pizzinelli P, et al. Stress management at the worksite: reversal of symptoms profile and cardiovascular dysregulation. *Hypertension.* 2007 Feb;49(2):291-7. Epub 2007 Jan 8. Comment in: *Hypertension.* 2007 Feb;49(2):268-9. [View Abstract](#).

Friday, April 20 – Saturday, April 21, 2007
McCormick Place - Lakeside Center, Chicago,
IL

Women's Healthcare Forum



Women's Healthcare Forum would like to invite all healthcare professionals to the 7th year of their CME program on comprehensive and integrative healthcare for women. Participating in Women's Healthcare Forum is an opportunity to be a part of a dynamic learning community and gain insight and knowledge on the unique healthcare needs of women. All attendees will receive two-weeks free access to the **Natural Standard** database.

Women's Healthcare Forum Overview:

- Multi-track CME sessions covering 36 topics
- Earn up to 15 AMA/PRA category 1 credits
- CE credits available for nurse practitioners and registered nurses
- Concurrent 2007 Expo program includes an extensive array of exhibiting healthcare product and service companies, clinician panels, non-accredited educational presentations and professional networking events

In addition, this year's Forum features expanded CAM-focused CME sessions led by two of the world's most renowned CAM experts: Tieraona Low Dog, MD, *Director of Education, University of Arizona Program in Integrative Medicine* & James N. Dillard, MD, DC, Lac, *Clinical Director, Columbia University Rosenthal Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine*.

Who Should Participate:

CME & Expo Programs

Clinicians: Family Practitioners, DOs, Internists, ObGyns, Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants and Nurses are encouraged to participate in all CME/CE and Expo program activities.

Expo Program

Others: Pharmacists, Residents, Fellows, Practice Managers, Patient Advocates, Therapists and other healthcare professionals committed to comprehensive and integrative healthcare for women.

Please Note: WHF 2007 live events programs are not open to the general public.

Conference Hours:

CME Program:

Fri., Apr 20: 7:00 am - 6:30 pm

Sat., Apr 21: 7:00 am - 6:00 pm

Expo Program:

Fri., Apr 20: 9:00 am - 6:30 pm

Sat., Apr 21: 9:00 am - 3:30 pm

Registration Information:

Women's Healthcare Forum and **Natural Standard** are pleased to offer all **Natural Standard** subscribers a discounted registration fee.

When registering, please use **priority code: WHFC706** to take advantage of this offer.

New in 2007: Expo-Only Registration—FREE! Expo-only registration is available for those who may not elect to participate in WHF's CME/CE program and provides unlimited access to the Expo hall and

program.

To register, please visit www.expotracsshows.com/whfchicago.

For more information about the Women's Healthcare Forum, please visit www.womenshf.com.

If you would like us to post your event(s) online, please e-mail: news@naturalstandard.com.

Faith for Recovery



Strong religious beliefs may help protect stroke patients from emotional distress and perhaps aid recovery, a new study reports.

Researchers at the San Raffaele Pisana Rehabilitation Institute in Rome, Italy explained that emotional distress is common in the aftermath of stroke and may have a negative impact on the patient's recovery.

The study evaluated whether religious beliefs can protect from emotional distress. Data was collected from 132 consecutive inpatients who were hospitalized for stroke rehabilitation and met the research requirements (median age was 72). At admission, all study participants received a semi-structured interview on religious beliefs (Royal Free Interview for religious and spiritual beliefs) and were assessed on their mood with the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale. The relationship between religious beliefs and mood was explored, adjusting for possible confounders.

The study found that subjects with the highest anxiety and depression scores had the least religious and spiritually beliefs. The direction and magnitude of the association did not change after adjusting for possible confounders. The same pattern was observed when analyzing separately Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale anxiety and depression subscales. The other significant variable was functional dependence.

Researchers speculated that people who are active in religious activities may have more social support, and that may positively influence the outcomes in stroke as well as other illnesses.

Most of the patients surveyed were Roman Catholic. The researchers note that religious coping mechanisms have been identified in non-Catholic people as well.

Researchers concluded that the strength of religious beliefs influences the ability to cope after a stroke event, with stronger religious beliefs acting as a possible protective factor against emotional distress.

There are several theories as to how prayer might be beneficial during illness, including both scientific and metaphysical explanations. It has been suggested that patients who pray for themselves or are aware that others are praying for them may develop stronger coping skills and decreased anxiety, thereby potentially improving health outcomes. Other theories include beneficial effects of prayer or "positive thinking" on the

immune system, central nervous system (brain) or endocrine (hormonal) system.

The meditative, relaxing effects of prayer have been suggested to have beneficial effects such as lowering blood pressure. There are no plausible scientific explanations for the possible effects of intercessory prayers said without the knowledge of patients.

Studies of the effects of intercessory prayer on health outcomes report variable results, with some research finding benefits, and other trials noting no effects.

For more information on prayer, distant healing or spiritual healing, please visit [Natural Standard's Health & Wellness](#) database.

Reference: 1) Giaquinto S, Spiridigliozzi C, Caracciolo B. Can Faith Protect From Emotional Distress After Stroke? *Stroke*. 2007 Feb 15. [Epub ahead of print] [View Abstract](#).

Group Exercise for Breast Cancer



Group exercise may have functional and psychological benefits for women suffering from breast cancer, a new study reports.

Researchers at the Department of Sport, Culture and the Arts, Strathclyde University in Glasgow, Scotland investigated the functional and psychological benefits of a 12-week supervised group exercise program during treatment for early stage breast cancer, with six month follow-up.

In the pragmatic randomized controlled prospective open trial, researchers recruited 203 women from three National Health Service oncology clinics in Scotland and community exercise facilities; 177 of the women completed the six month follow-up.

Participants engaged in a supervised 12-week group exercise program in addition to usual care. The study used a functional assessment of cancer therapy (FACT) questionnaire, Beck depression inventory, positive and negative affect scale, body mass index, seven day recall of physical activity, 12-minute walk test and assessment of shoulder mobility to measure the outcome.

While no significant effect was seen for general quality of life (FACT-G), which was the primary outcome after the initial three months, at the six month follow-up, most of the effects were maintained and an intervention effect for breast cancer specific quality of life emerged. No adverse effects were noted.

Researchers concluded that supervised group exercise provided functional and psychological benefit after a 12-week intervention and six months later.

For more information on breast cancer, please visit [Natural Standard's Condition Center](#) database.

Reference: 1) Mutrie N, Campbell AM, Whyte F, et al. Benefits of supervised group exercise programme for women being treated for early stage breast cancer: pragmatic randomised controlled trial. *BMJ*. 2007

Expressive Writing Therapy

Expressive writing therapy may be an alternative source of healing for cancer patients, a new report suggests.

Researchers at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School in Boston, MA found that expressive writing or journal therapy may boost mental and physical health in patients suffering from cancer.

Harvard researchers explained that many cancer patients turn to support groups, psychotherapy or antidepressant drugs to help them cope with the fears and challenges the illness brings.

Expressive writing or journal therapy offers an alternative to those treatments. Researchers suggest that by spending 30 minutes every day for four days writing out innermost thoughts and feelings, patients can significantly improve their health.

In expressive writing therapy, patients are encouraged to express whatever is on their mind, letting their hopes and fears flow out. This allows patients to better understand what may be bothering them or triggering stress.

Patients with the best results experienced a sense of release and found they were able to come to terms with some of their issues.

Researchers tracking the effects of journal therapy in patients with breast cancer noted that more than the typical 30 minutes per day of writing for four days may be required to see benefits and the therapy may not be effective in all patients.

Researchers concluded that standard 4-day therapy was effective in reducing physical symptoms.

In a related study, researchers at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY examined the role of expressive journal writing characteristics on mood over the course of a 12-week support group in 43 women newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

Writing was analyzed using the linguistic inquiry and word count program. Writing characteristics that were examined included: average word count, number of journal entries, positive and negative emotion words, the ratio of positive to negative words and the use of cognitive mechanism words (i.e. insight and causal words).

Regression analyses revealed that increased levels of anxiety and depression, post-intervention, were predicted by the prevalence of negative emotion in writing. Unique variance in mood (anxiety and depression) was accounted for by expression of negative emotion (seven and six percent, respectively).

The study found these relationships were significant and remained significant even after accounting for pre-intervention levels of distress, and for the quantity and frequency of writing.

Researchers concluded that additional research into the naturalistic application of journaling is needed so



that appropriate recommendations for writing (e.g. focus, timing, amount) can be offered to patients who might choose to utilize this approach for coping with the stresses of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

And finally, a study conducted at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center examined 42 patients with metastatic renal cell carcinoma (kidney cancer). In the Phase II clinical trial, patients were randomly assigned to an expressive writing (EW) group or neutral writing (NW) group.

Patients in the EW group wrote about their cancer, and patients in the NW group wrote about health behaviors. No statistically significant differences were found regarding symptoms of distress, perceived stress or mood disturbance. However, patients in the EW group reported significantly less sleep disturbance, better sleep quality and sleep duration and less daytime dysfunction compared with patients in the NW group.

Researchers concluded that EW may have sleep-related health benefits in terminally ill cancer patients.

More studies are needed to confirm overall health benefits, mental and physical, of expressive journal writing in cancer patients. However, there is evidence at this time that expressive writing therapy may help cancer patients cope with stress, relieve anxiety and experience improvements in sleep quality and duration.

For more information on alternative and integrative therapies for cancer, please visit [Natural Standard's Condition Center](#) database.

References:

- 1) de Moor C, Sterner J, Hall M, et al. A pilot study of the effects of expressive writing on psychological and behavioral adjustment in patients enrolled in a Phase II trial of vaccine therapy for metastatic renal cell carcinoma. *Health Psychol.* 2002 Nov;21(6):615-9. [View Abstract.](#)
- 2) Norris RL, Bauer-Wu S. Being mindful, easing suffering. *J Palliat Med.* 2007 Feb;10(1):261-2. [View Abstract.](#)
- 3) Smith S, Anderson-Hanley C, Langrock A, et al. The effects of journaling for women with newly diagnosed breast cancer. *Psychooncology.* 2005 Dec;14(12):1075-82. [View Abstract.](#)



Libraries: Launching the Future
NMLA/MPLA 2007 Conference
Albuquerque, NM March 14-16, 2007

March 14-16, 2007 the New Mexico Library Association (NMLA) is hosting a joint annual conference with the Mountain Plains Library Association (MPLA) in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The conference will offer librarians from the Mountain Plains region an opportunity to learn, share and network with fellow professionals while enjoying beautiful and diverse New Mexico.

For more information, please visit www.mnla.org.

If you would like us to post your event(s) online, please e-mail: news@naturalstandard.com.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!



While clinical research supporting the efficacy of the traditional St. Patrick's Day shamrock is lacking, the green three-leaf clover's cousin, red clover, has traditionally been used to treat asthma, pertussis, cancer and gout.

Red clover is a legume, which like soy contains "phytoestrogens" (plant-based compounds structurally similar to estradiol, capable of binding to estrogen receptors as an agonist or antagonist).

In modern times, isoflavone extracts of red clover are most often used to treat menopausal symptoms, as an alternative hormone replacement therapy, for hyperlipidemia or to prevent osteoporosis.

Chinese and Russian folk healers have used red clover to treat respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis. Native American healers recommended red clover for pertussis and cancer.

In the Middle Ages, it was considered a charm against witchcraft. Red clover serves as a grazing food for many animals and has been implicated as a cause of infertility in livestock. Some believe that topical red clover can accelerate wound healing and alleviate psoriasis.

Some experts believe that topical red clover accelerates wound healing and alleviates psoriasis. Recently, it has been speculated that red clover may have beneficial effects on bone metabolism, serum lipid levels, and arterial compliance, due to its phytoestrogen properties. Red clover is often recommended for these indications, although there is a paucity of scientific evidence.

For more information on red clover, please visit [Natural Standard's Herbs & Supplements](#) database.



Natural Standard would like to welcome Leah Witherell, PharmD, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy.

Allergies and nutrient depletion are included in Natural Standard's new and improved advanced interaction checker.

Stay tuned for launch of our new Allergy & Immunology Database and BLOG this month.

Natural Standard's Founder and CEO, Dr. Catherine Ulbricht, will be giving a CE lecture at Chambersburg hospital in Pennsylvania in March on Alternative Medicine.

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