Title:
Acupuncture is an effective treatment for chronic low back pain.

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Abstract:
According to a study recently done in Germany, almost half of patients suffering from chronic low back pain should expect to see a reduction in pain and increase in their functional ability, if they include some kind of acupuncture in their treatment regimen. Acupuncture may soon be considered part of the accepted standard therapy for back pain, along with more conventional treatments such as physical therapy, pain medications and steroid injections.

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Chronic low back pain

- Approximately 80% of Americans will experience back pain in their lifetime.
- Chronic back pain is defined as pain that lasts for more than 3 months.
- Common causes of back pain include...
  - The discs between the vertebrae become worn over time or rupture due to injury.
  - Ligaments connecting the vertebrae can become sprained during improper lifting or twisting.
  - Vertebrae may fracture due to osteoporosis.
  - The spinal cord canal becomes gradually narrower with age, called spinal stenosis.

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What can be done if I have chronic back pain?

The vast majority of patients do not require surgery. Standard treatment may include the following options:

- Physical Therapy
- Strength Training
- Weight-Loss
- Daily use of Ibuprofen, Aleve, etc. for pain relief
- Short-term use of narcotic pain medications
- Steroid injections

Consult your physician for the most appropriate options for you.

Do more alternative treatments like acupuncture work?

In one of the most recent rigorous medical trials, acupuncture was shown to decrease pain and increase back function in over 40% of people dealing with sources of chronic back pain. Although acupuncture is not yet covered on most insurance plans in the U.S., its use and acceptance in the western world seems promising if it continues to help chronic pain patients.

Spinal manipulation or massage, often done by a chiropractor, shows a somewhat smaller, but significant degree of success in short term relief of chronic back pain. Although, this should not be done in the case of osteoporosis or spinal cord compression injuries.

What can I do to prevent back pain?

- Exercise regularly - Focusing on building strength in the back as well as abdominal muscles. Core focused fitness programs such as pilates or yoga are also helpful.
- Proper Lifting Technique - Using your legs, and never bending over the object to be moved.
- Balanced Diet - Including the recommended amount of Calcium and Vitamin D.

Where can I get more information?

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin diseases-
www.niams.nih.gov

MedlinePlus-
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke-
www.ninds.nih.gov