



# Back pain and acupuncture

Back pain is probably one of the most common complaints treated with acupuncture in the UK.

Acupuncture has long been accepted as an effective treatment for back ache and lumbago. Both the World Health Organization <sup>[1]</sup> and House of Lords' Select Committee on Science and Technology <sup>[2]</sup> recognise the usefulness of acupuncture in this sphere.



The NHS has reported on successful clinical trials where acupuncture was used to relieve lower back pain <sup>[3]</sup> and a number of NHS trusts now run limited acupuncture pain clinics.

Traditional Chinese Medicine generally categorises back pain as one of three types:

- **“Retention of cold and damp”** may occur if the painful area has been affected by the environment, for example, if the small of the back was inadvertently exposed to a cold wind whilst working in the garden. This type of pain is usually dull and constant.
- **“Stagnation of Qi and blood”** is more often associated with a muscular injury, perhaps caused by overwork or a sporting strain. Qi (roughly pronounced “chee”) is the intangible “vital energy” that flows around the body. If its path is obstructed by a muscular strain then pain will arise. This type of pain is normally intermittent but sharper.
- **“Kidney deficiency”** is usually linked to longterm back pain and is more frequently seen in the middle-aged and elderly. Acupuncture combined with Chinese Herbal Medicine can play a useful role in improving this condition.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, back pain is often treated by choosing acupuncture points on the bladder and kidney meridians. The bladder meridian is used as it passes all the way down the back, on its journey from the head to the ankles, and so may have a great influence on back pain.



Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like more information on acupuncture, Chinese Herbal Medicine or Traditional Chinese Medicine.

**Gary Minns**

**Barbican Acupuncture**

**1 Wallside, Barbican, London, EC2Y 8BH**

**T 020 7638 4322**

**E Gary@BarbicanAcupuncture.com**

**W www.BarbicanAcupuncture.com**

## References:

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- [3] NHS. (2007). *Acupuncture may ease back pain*. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2007/September/Pages/Acupuncturemaybeeffectiveforbackpain.aspx>



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