

# Acupuncture Treatment for Sports-related Injuries in Athletes

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## Introduction

Acupuncture is a well-known complementary and alternative medicine therapy for numerous forms of pain. This systematic review gathered and analysed clinical case reports/series that used acupuncture to treat sports injuries in athletes, laying the groundwork for future research to produce clinical evidence on acupuncture therapy in sports medicine. A thorough literature search was undertaken in Embase, including MEDLINE, up to and including August 21, 2019, with no language or publication date constraints. Explanatory and descriptive analyses were carried out due to the heterogeneity of each research. As a consequence, it was established in each case report/series that acupuncture was used to treat various types of sports injuries encountered by athletes [1-3].

## Description

Exercise has performed a variety of tasks in recent years, in addition to boosting health. Regular exercise not only improves an individual's health, but it is also regarded as a "therapy" for people from all walks of life, including the paediatric and geriatric populations, those suffering from chronic conditions, and those suffering from obesity. Exercise has clear advantages in general, but it also necessitates good technique, strength, and regularity. As the population of sports fans grows, sports injuries have become a common ailment. Most sports injuries are caused by musculoskeletal diseases, which reoccur repeatedly. Although uncommon in comparison to musculoskeletal diseases, sports medicine encompasses a wide range of diseases that prevent athletes from participating in sports, including psychological issues.

In compared to recreational athletes or non-athletes, top athletes are seen to have more precise goals and are more motivated to improve performance. Sports injuries are understandably important to professional athletes since they have a direct impact on their careers and financial gain. As a result, an athlete-centered, long-term return-to-play (RTP) approach for athletes with sports injuries is thought to be of the highest importance. The goal of an athlete's therapy and rehabilitation is to return to their respective sports with minimum performance loss, whereas the goal of non-athletes is to return to regular everyday activities. As a result, athletes' sports injuries frequently result in difficult factors in the doctors' decision-making process.

Regarding the treatment strategy for sports injuries, it is critical to evaluate the patient's background, including the type of sport and nature of the injury, or their regular training or match schedules, as well as whether they participate in professional or leisure sports. As a result, practitioners must be aware of the richness of clinical research about sports-specific profiles and treatment choices. Experimental research, such as randomised controlled trials or controlled clinical trials, can give useful findings but have limits, particularly

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in athletes. Although little is known about the motivations of elite athletes to participate in clinical studies, the benefits, which are generally thought to be patients' motivations in clinical studies, such as access to health care and personal benefit, altruism, and monetary incentives, may not be appealing to elite athletes.

This might explain why most tests on athletes were uncontrolled trials requiring the involvement of a whole team, or experiments with young nonprofessional athletes or a diverse group of athletes. A case report is a thorough account of an individual patient's diagnosis, therapy, reaction to treatment, and follow-up, whereas a case series combines different patients that underwent comparable therapies into a single report. In essence, clinical case reports or series not only sit at the bottom of the evidence-based medicine ladder, but also demonstrate a lower causal link than RCTs.

Acupuncture is a nonpharmaceutical therapy that has been shown to reduce pain, particularly in the musculoskeletal system. Acupuncture's therapeutic benefits are linked to central and systemic mechanisms involving the brain or autonomic nervous system, as well as local actions at the acupuncture site. Previous research has indicated that acupuncture alters the levels of neurotransmitters or chemicals such as beta-endorphin, dopamine, serotonin, and cortisol and has a specific influence on the limbic system or emotional portion of the brain. Acupuncture may also be useful in treating chronic pain associated with depression, drug addiction, and degenerative illnesses such as Alzheimer disease, according to other research [4,5].

## Conclusion

Through case reports/series on sports injuries in athletes, we attempted to discover the potential of acupuncture for controlling discomfort in athletes and their return to exercise in this review. Beyond pain management in musculoskeletal problems, the reviewed cases demonstrated some promise for acupuncture in the treatment of other forms of sports injuries. Furthermore, this study will help practitioners who want to employ acupuncture to treat sports injuries and enable realistic clinical uses of acupuncture, allowing patients to explore fresh treatment choices. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to carefully search, evaluate, and analyse clinical case reports/series on the possible application of acupuncture in the treatment of athletes' sports injuries.

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