

Soy, black cohosh may have some benefit for menopause symptoms

Nedrow A, Miller J, Walker M, Nygren P, Huffman H, Nelson HD. Complementary and alternative therapies for the management of menopause-related symptoms. *Arch Intern Med* 2006; 166:1453-1465

CLINICAL QUESTION: WHICH COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE APPROACHES ARE EFFECTIVE IN DECREASING SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE?

Bottom Line

There is no evidence of benefit of acupuncture, magnet therapy, stress reduction, exercise, progressive muscle relaxation, or traditional Chinese herbal therapy on menopausal symptoms. Black cohosh, which has been associated with liver toxicity, and soy supplements may decrease hot flashes in some patients, and osteopathic manipulation was effective in one study. (Level of evidence [LOE] = 1a-)

- *Study Design:* Systematic review
- *Funding:* Government
- *Setting:* Other
- *Synopsis:* The goal of this systematic review was to assemble all available clinical research evaluating any of the 5 categories of complementary and alternative medicine: biologically based (dietary supplements and vitamins), mind-body, energy, manipulative and body-based, and whole medical systems (eg, Ayurveda). The review used the evidence report/technology assessment methodology of the Agency for Healthcare Policy and Research.

- The authors searched multiple databases and reference lists of identified articles, contacted experts, and searched Web sites for randomized placebo-controlled trials and meta-analyses published in English. Much of the literature on herbal therapies is published in German, though it doesn't appear that they excluded any applicable German-language studies. Two investigators independently evaluated the quality of the research using the criteria from the US Preventive Services Task Force.
- Although studies graded as poor quality found a benefit with soy supplements (dietary, supplements, or red clover), the effect on symptoms in fair or good studies were mixed, with some studies showing improvement in hot flashes. The largest study of black cohosh demonstrated a benefit in a variety of menopausal symptoms. However, black cohosh has been linked in the United Kingdom to abnormal liver function. Stress reduction, aerobic exercise, progressive muscle relaxation were not effective in fair or poor-quality studies.
- One study of 10 treatments with lowforce osteopathic manipulation showed a decrease in symptoms. Neither reflexology nor magnet treatment were effective. Traditional Chinese medical herbs were also ineffective, as was acupuncture; ginseng produced improvement in mood and health scores but did not affect hot flashes.

FAST TRACK

The largest study of black cohosh found a benefit for menopause symptoms, but the herb has been linked to abnormal liver function

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