**Is sticking needles in babies really the best way to ease distress from colic? Scientists split over using acupuncture to treat the condition**

* **Acupuncture may stop babies suffering from colic from crying so much**
* **Research suggests it could help reduce the distress of babies with the condition**
* **One British professor said the idea of ‘sticking needles’ into a baby was ‘bizarre’**

By [Ben Spencer Medical Correspondent For The Daily Mail](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=&authornamef=Ben+Spencer+Medical+Correspondent+For+The+Daily+Mail)

**PUBLISHED:** 01:01, 17 January 2017 | **UPDATED:** 08:03, 17 January 2017

* [e-mail](mailto:?subject=Read%20this:%20Is%20sticking%20needles%20in%20babies%20really%20the%20best%20way%20to%20ease%20distress%20from%20colic?%20Scientists%20split%20over%20using%20acupuncture%20to%20treat%20the%20condition%C2%A0&body=Is%20sticking%20needles%20in%20babies%20really%20the%20best%20way%20to%20ease%20distress%20from%20colic%3F%20Scientists%20split%20over%20using%20acupuncture%20to%20treat%20the%20condition%C2%A0%0A%0AResearch%20led%20by%20experts%20at%20Lund%20University%20in%20Sweden%2C%20suggests%20the%20ancient%20Chinese%20practice%20could%20help%20reduce%20the%20distress%20of%20babies%20with%20the%20condition.%0A%0Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fnews%2Farticle-4126482%2FIs-sticking-needles-babies-best-way-treat-colic.html%3Fito%3Demail_share_article-top%0A%0A%0AMost%20Read%20Articles%3A%0A%0AMum%20has%20two%20sets%20of%20twins%20despite%20using%20CONTRACEPTION%3A%20Emma%20had%20first%20surprise%20pregnancy%20while%20on%20the%20pill%2C%20then%20switched%20to%20an%20implant...%20only%20to%20conceive%20again%20and%20beat%20three-billion-to-one%20odds%C2%A0%0Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fhealth%2Farticle-4262100%2FMother-two-sets-twins-birth-control.html%3Fito%3Demail_share_article-top_most-read-articles%0A%0AA%20yawning%20gap%21%20Mums%20lose%20more%20sleep%20than%20dads%3A%20Chance%20of%20regularly%20not%20getting%20enough%20shuteye%20goes%20up%20by%2050%25%20for%20every%20child%20a%20woman%20has%0Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fhealth%2Farticle-4262502%2FA-yawning-gap-Mums-lose-sleep-dads.html%3Fito%3Demail_share_article-top_most-read-articles%0A%0AMadeleine%20McCann%27s%20father%20warns%20thousands%20of%20heart%20patients%20are%20undergoing%20needless%20surgery%2C%20which%20is%20costing%20the%20NHS%20%C2%A360m%20a%20year%2C%20due%20to%20an%20inaccurate%20test%0Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fhealth%2Farticle-4263480%2FInaccurate-heart-test-costing-NHS-says-Gerry-McCann.html%3Fito%3Demail_share_article-top_most-read-articles%0A%0A)

**32**shares

**[66](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4126482/Is-sticking-needles-babies-best-way-treat-colic.html" \l "comments)**

[View comments](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4126482/Is-sticking-needles-babies-best-way-treat-colic.html" \l "comments)

Acupuncture may stop babies suffering from colic from crying so much, say scientists.

The research, led by experts at Lund University in Sweden, suggests the ancient Chinese practice could help reduce the distress of babies with the condition.

Other scientists dismissed the idea, however, with one British professor saying the very idea of ‘sticking needles’ into a baby was ‘bizarre’.

Colic, which affects one in five babies, is the name given to a period of intense crying in a baby who appears to be otherwise healthy.

Experts are unsure what causes the problem, which usually lasts a few weeks in babies under the age of four months, but it is believed to be caused by indigestion, trapped wind or gut sensitivity.

Researchers tested 144 babies with colic, aged two to eight weeks, comparing the effects of two different forms of acupuncture to normal treatment.

Each of the babies had been crying for at least three hours a day, on at least three days a week.

One group of babies received minimal acupuncture, another group received individual acupuncture inspired by traditional Chinese medicine and the last group had no acupuncture.

This happened twice weekly for a fortnight.

Each baby’s parents kept extensive diaries noting down the time and period for which babies cried.

Babies who were given acupuncture saw a greater reduction in the amount of time spent crying, the authors wrote in the BMJ journal Acupuncture In Medicine.

The authors noted that the babies ‘tolerated the treatment fairly well’, adding that in 200 of 388 sessions, the babies did not cry at all.

But 8 per cent of the treatments triggered crying that lasted longer than a minute, they said.



+2

Research, led by experts at Lund University in Sweden, suggests the ancient Chinese practice could help reduce the distress of babies with the condition

‘The magnitude of the reduction in crying was greater, suggesting a faster recovery, in infants who received either type of acupuncture compared to gold standard care alone,’ they wrote.

‘For those infants that continue to cry for more than three hours a day, acupuncture may be an effective treatment option.’

Acupuncture, which was devised in China 2,000 years ago, involves stimulating sensory nerves under the skin and in the muscles of the body.

Practitioners believe this triggers the relief of natural chemicals and hormones such as pain-relieving endorphins.

But many scientist dispute the power of the treatment.

Professor David Colquhoun, a pharmacology expert at University College London, said: ‘Like most forms of alternative medicine, acupuncture has been advocated for a vast range of problems, and there is little evidence that it works for any of them.

‘Colic has not been prominent in these claims.

‘What parent would think that sticking needles into their baby would stop it crying? The idea sounds bizarre. It is.’

And Professor Edzard Ernst of the University of Exeter, added: ‘This confirms previous research showing that acupuncture is a “theatrical placebo”.

‘We know that colicky babies respond even to minimal attention, and this trial confirms that a little additional TLC will generate an effect. The observed outcome is therefore not necessarily related to acupuncture.’

Professor George Lewith of the University of Southampton, however, backed the Swedish researchers.

‘This looks to me to be a good sized fastidious well conducted study,’ he said.

‘The outcome is clear and the power of the study seems reasonable which suggests that minimal acupuncture is a reasonable and as far as we know safe intervention for infantile colic.’

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4126482/Is-sticking-needles-babies-best-way-treat-colic.html#ixzz4ZsuIPQWK>   
Follow us: [@MailOnline on Twitter](http://ec.tynt.com/b/rw?id=bBOTTqvd0r3Pooab7jrHcU&u=MailOnline) | [DailyMail on Facebook](http://ec.tynt.com/b/rf?id=bBOTTqvd0r3Pooab7jrHcU&u=DailyMail" \t "_blank)