**Acupuncture may help crying babies**

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Acupuncture could reduce the amount of time colicky babies spend crying, a small study suggests.

But one expert has discredited the study, saying the idea of "sticking needles" into a baby is "bizarre".

Researchers in Sweden set out to compare two different styles of acupuncture compared with no acupuncture.

The 144 babies with colic aged two to eight weeks who participated were split into three groups.

All babies were given usual care plus additional visits to public child health centres where they would receive additional advice and support, or "gold standard care".

Once at the centres, 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.

The parents of the babies involved were required to keep extensive diaries noting down the time and length babies cried.

The amount of time babies spent crying was reduced across all three groups, but the authors said this was to be expected as colic is a "spontaneously healing condition".

However, the researchers concluded that the two types of acupuncture were both superior to gold standard care alone.

By the second week, babies who were given acupuncture saw a greater reduction in the amount of time spent crying, the authors wrote in the 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.

"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.

Commenting on the study, David Colquhoun, professor of pharmacology 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.

"This paper certainly doesn’t show that it works."