

# Clinical Decision Aid

Acupuncture / Acupressure for PONV Prevention and Management

## BOTTOM LINE

Patients with 2 or more Apfel risk factors should be considered for PC6 acupoint stimulation. Acupressure wristbands are the lowest-barrier starting point (RR 0.60 nausea, 0.54 vomiting). **HIGH**

## Step 1: Assess PONV Risk (Apfel Score)

Score 1 point for each factor present

Female gender

History of PONV or motion sickness

Non-smoker

Post-operative opioid use expected

Risk score:  / 4 Each additional factor increases PONV risk by 20% (Apfel et al., 1999).

Score	0	1	2	3-4
Risk	10%	20%	40%	60-80%

## Step 2: Is Acupuncture / Acupressure Indicated?

- Score 0-1: Standard pharmacological prophylaxis per local guidelines. Acupoint stimulation optional.
- Score 2+: Acupuncture/acupressure **recommended** as adjunct or alternative. Combined with antiemetics, PC6 stimulation provides additive benefit. **MODERATE**

## Step 3: Select Modality

Setting	Recommended Modality	Nausea RR	Evidence
Nurse-led / first implementation	Acupressure wristbands	0.60	<b>HIGH</b>
Credentialed acupuncturist available	Body or auricular acupuncture	0.56	<b>MODERATE</b>
High-risk (score 3-4)	Electroacupressure + wristbands	0.71	<b>MODERATE</b>
Combined approach	PC6 + additional acupoints	RR 0.29	<b>MODERATE</b>

## Step 4: Determine Timing

- **Prevention:** Apply 30 minutes pre-operatively. Wristbands may be applied up to 12–24 hours before surgery.
- **Management:** Apply at symptom onset. Position wristband button firmly over PC6; press for 2 minutes.

## Step 5: Who Delivers the Intervention?

Modality	Delivered By	Training Required
Wristbands / manual acupressure	Nurses, midwives, ward staff	Minimal (PC6 location)
Body / auricular acupuncture	Credentialed acupuncturist	Formal qualification
Electroacupressure	Trained nurse or acupuncturist	Moderate (device + PC6)

## Step 6: Document and Monitor

- Record modality, timing, and duration in patient notes
- Assess PONV at Recovery, Ward, and pre-Discharge
- Document rescue antiemetic use (drug, dose, time)
- Report adverse events (expected: mild, transient only)
- Audit outcomes monthly to sustain fidelity

Sources: Apfel et al. 1999; Lee et al. 2015 (Cochrane); Cheong et al. 2013; Gan et al. 2014 PONV Guidelines.