

Intervention Comparison Card

Acupuncture and Acupressure Modalities for Hospital Use

BOTTOM LINE

Six modalities are available for hospital-based acupoint stimulation. Acupressure wristbands offer the best balance of evidence, cost, and ease of implementation for most hospital settings. All PC6 stimulation modalities reduce nausea (RR 0.68), vomiting (RR 0.60), and rescue antiemetic use (RR 0.64) compared to sham or no treatment.

Modality Comparison

Modality	Nausea RR	Vomiting RR	Cost	Evidence
Acupressure Wristbands	0.60 (0.53–0.69)	0.54 (0.45–0.64)	~\$5 AUD	HIGH
Body Acupuncture (PC6+)	0.56 (0.39–0.80)	0.51 (0.34–0.76)	~\$0.05	MODERATE
Electroacupressure	0.71 (0.62–0.81)	0.60 (0.50–0.73)	\$40–200	MODERATE
Electroacupuncture	~0.56	~0.51	\$200–800	MODERATE
Auricular Acupuncture	Varies	Varies	~\$0.05	LOW
Manual Acupressure	Varies	Varies	\$0	LOW

RR = Relative Risk. Values < 1.0 favour acupuncture/acupressure. Source: Lee et al., 2015 (Cochrane); Cheong et al., 2013.

Modality Characteristics

Modality	Advantages	Disadvantages	Training
Wristbands	No infection risk; extended use; home continuation; minimal training; flexible delivery	Limited sizing for large wrists; impractical with multiple IV lines	Minimal
Body Acupuncture	Economical; individualised point selection; combinable with other points	Needle monitoring required; staff training needed	Moderate
Electroacupressure	Extended duration; adjustable intensity	Equipment cost; training required	Moderate
Electroacupuncture	Reusable equipment; adjustable stimulus	Higher equipment cost; monitoring required	Significant

Modality	Advantages	Disadvantages	Training
Auricular	Economical; individualised; low misplacement risk	Qualified acupuncturist may be needed	Significant
Manual Acupressure	No equipment; no needles; easily trained	Effectiveness varies by practitioner skill	Minimal

Combined PC6 Stimulation Evidence (All Modalities)

Pooled Effect Sizes

- **Nausea:** 47% → 31% (RR 0.68, 95% CI 0.60–0.77) **HIGH**
- **Vomiting:** 33% → 19% (RR 0.60, 95% CI 0.51–0.71) **HIGH**
- **Rescue antiemetics:** 33% → 20% (RR 0.64, 95% CI 0.55–0.73) **MODERATE**
- **Side effects:** Mild and transient only
- **Drug interaction:** Enhanced efficacy when combined with pharmacological antiemetics

Source: Lee A, Chan SK, Fan LT. Stimulation of the wrist acupuncture point PC6 for preventing postoperative nausea and vomiting. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2015.

Decision Guide

Which modality should I choose?

- **First-time implementation / nurse-led:** Start with **acupressure wristbands** — lowest barrier, strongest evidence, minimal training
- **Credentialed acupuncturist available:** Consider **body or auricular acupuncture** for individualised treatment
- **High-risk patients / extended prevention:** Consider **electroacupressure** for adjustable, continuous stimulation
- **Research setting:** **Electroacupuncture** provides standardised, reproducible stimulus
- **Combined approach:** PC6 + additional acupoints reduces PONV from 21% to 6% (RR 0.29, 95% CI 0.17–0.49)