

Complimentary And Alternative Care For Chronic Pain

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If you're considering using alternative medicine for chronic pain, talk with your doctor or medical provider first. It's important to note that self-treating with alternative medicine and avoiding or delaying standard care may be harmful to your health.

- ▶ Make sure you ask the Complimentary/Alternative Practitioner if they specialize in chronic pain before seeking treatment from them.
- ▶ There are many alternative treatments instead of medication available to treat chronic pain.
- ▶ Research over the past 20 years has shown that the brain is a major component in chronic pain and that the brain can be changed. This is called neuroplasticity.
 - ▶ Neuroplasticity is an approach to pain management that empowers the patient “to do their part” as Hippocrates suggests. **Neuroplasticity is the active involvement of the whole patient: mind (thoughts), brain (physical structure; i.e. neurons etc.), and body in their recovery from chronic pain.** Neuroplasticity searches for areas; healthy mind, brain and body that may aid in recovery while acknowledging the pain and deficits experienced by the patient.

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- ▶ Some of the techniques that may help with chronic pain are:
 - ▶ Aromatherapy
 - ▶ The use of aromatic plant extracts and essential oils in massage or baths.
 - ▶ Acupuncture
 - ▶ A 2008 study published in *Spine* found "strong evidence that acupuncture can be a useful supplement to other forms of conventional therapy" for chronic pain. After analyzing 23 clinical trials with a total of 6,359 patients, the study authors also found "moderate evidence that acupuncture is more effective than no treatment" in relief of back pain.
 - ▶ Just how does acupuncture work? According to [traditional Chinese medicine](#), pain results from blocked energy along energy pathways of the body, which are unblocked when acupuncture needles are inserted along these invisible pathways. Acupuncture may release natural pain-relieving opioids, send signals to the sympathetic nervous system, and release neurochemicals and hormones.



- ▶ **Massage Therapy**

- ▶ In a 2009 research review published in *Spine*, researchers reviewed 13 clinical trials on the use of massage in treatment of back pain. The study authors concluded that massage "might be beneficial for patients with subacute and chronic, **especially when combined with exercises and education.**" Massage therapy may also alleviate anxiety and depression associated with chronic pain.

- ▶ **Chiropractic**

- ▶ Back pain is one of most common reasons people visit a chiropractor. Doctors of chiropractic use chiropractic spinal manipulation to restore joint mobility. They manually apply a controlled force to joints that have become restricted by muscle injury, strain, inflammation, and pain. Manipulation is believed to relieve pain and muscle tightness and encourage healing.



- ▶ **Vitamin D**

- ▶ Chronic muscle pain can be a symptom of vitamin D deficiency. What's more, some research suggests that treatment with vitamin D supplements may lead to clinical improvement in chronic pain symptoms among people with low initial concentrations of vitamin D, according to a 2005 report published in the *British Medical Journal*.

- ▶ **Yoga**

- ▶ Yoga creates balance in the body through various poses that develop flexibility and strength.

- ▶ **Hypnotherapy**

- ▶ Also referred to as "hypnosis," hypnotherapy is a mind-body technique that involves entering a trance-like state of deep relaxation and concentration. When undergoing hypnotherapy, patients are thought to be more open to suggestion. As such, hypnotherapy is often used to effect change in behaviors thought to contribute to health problems, including chronic pain.



- Physical Therapy

- which includes manual techniques and exercise.

- Exercise:

- Being active releases pressure on your disks in your back and neck, and that can help you feel better. If you work at a desk, take breaks regularly. Stand up, stretch, and walk around. Regular exercise is important. Start a walking program, or try a workout routine that strengthens your muscles.

- Aqua Therapy Exercise

- Manual Techniques:

- CranioSacral Therapy

- Myofascial Release Therapy

- Visceral Mobilization

- Strain Counterstrain Techniques

- Lymph Drainage

- Somato-emotional Release Techniques

- Postural Retraining

- Mechanical Link Technique



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- ▶ **Balneotherapy**

- ▶ One of the oldest therapies for pain relief, balneotherapy is a form of hydrotherapy that involves bathing in mineral water or warm water including Dead Sea Salts.

- ▶ **Meditation**

- ▶ An ancient mind-body practice, meditation has been found to increase pain tolerance and promote management of chronic pain in a number of small studies. In addition, a number of preliminary studies have focused specifically on the use of meditation in management of low back pain. A 2008 study published in *Pain*, for example, found that an eight-week meditation program led to an improvement of pain acceptance and physical function in patients with chronic low back pain. The study included 37 older adults, with members meditating an average of 4.3 days a week for an average of 31.6 minutes a day.



- ▶ **Music Therapy**

- ▶ Music therapy is a low-cost natural therapy that may reduce some of the stress of chronic pain in conjunction with other treatment. Studies find that it may reduce the disability, anxiety, and depression associated with chronic pain.

- ▶ **DNRS: Dynamic Neural Retraining System**

- ▶ The Dynamic Neural Retraining System™ is a natural, drug-free, neuroplasticity-based healing program, DNRS directly targets brain function and a maladapted stress response that is at the root of suffering for so many. DNRS teaches you how to change the function and structure of your brain. When you rewire the limbic system, you move your body from a state of survival to a state of growth and repair – where true healing can take place.

- ▶ **Feldenkrais Method**

- ▶ Feldenkrais Method is a method to improve body awareness in different positions and during movement.

- ▶ **Alexander Technique**

- ▶ Alexander Technique is a type of therapy that teaches people to improve their posture and eliminate bad habits such as slouching, which can lead to pain, muscle tension, and decreased mobility.

- ▶ **Tai Chi and Water (Aqua) Tai Chi**

- ▶ Tai chi is an ancient martial art that involves slow, graceful movements and incorporates meditation and deep breathing. Thought to reduce stress, tai chi has been found to benefit people with chronic pain in a number of small studies.



- ▶ Herbal Remedies

- ▶ It's possible that certain herbal treatments may be helpful for chronic pain.

- ▶ Biofeedback and Mind-Based Treatments

- ▶ Biofeedback uses special equipment, usually at a doctor's or therapist's office, to give you information about your body's physical reactions. It can teach you how to monitor and control your breathing and your pulse to help you relax and ease chronic pain.

- ▶ Reflexology

- ▶ A system of massage used to relieve tension and treat illness, based on the theory that there are reflex points on the feet, hands, and head linked to every part of the body.

- ▶ Capsaicin Cream

- ▶ Although you may not have heard of capsaicin before, if you've ever eaten a chili pepper and felt your mouth burn, you know exactly what capsaicin does. Capsaicin is the active ingredient in chili peppers.



- ▶ Vitamin B12

- ▶ A study published in the *European Review for Medical and Pharmacological Sciences* in 2000 examined the safety and effectiveness of vitamin B12 injections for low back pain. Involving 60 patients, the study found that those who received vitamin B12 injections experienced a statistically significant reduction in pain and disability. They also used less pain medication than those who received a placebo.

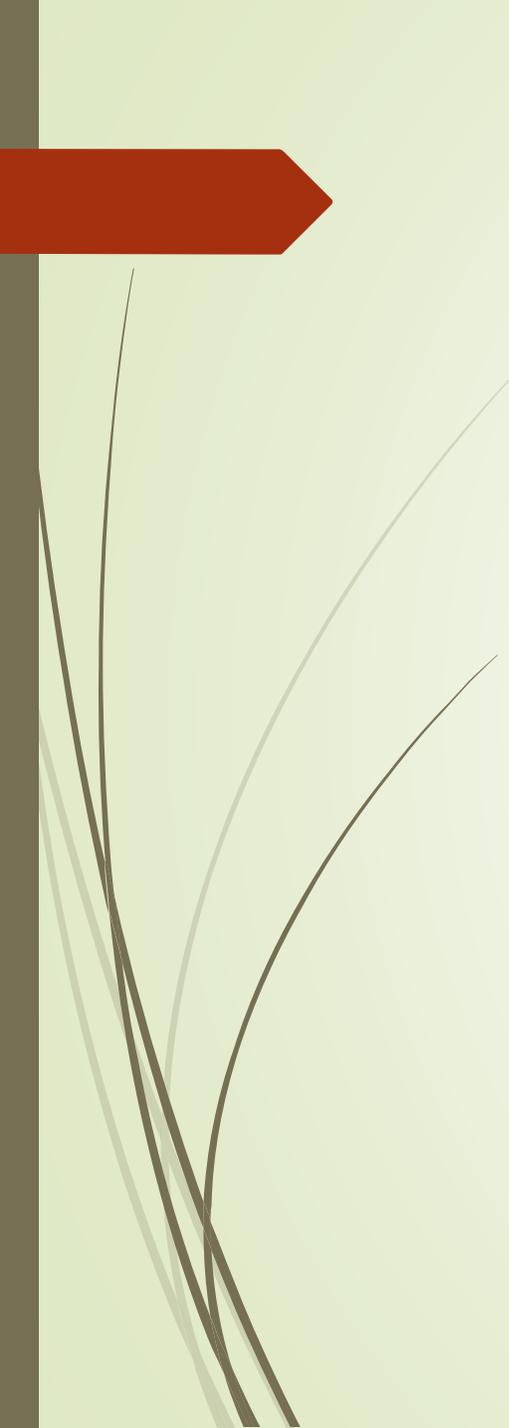
- ▶ Pilates

- ▶ A system of exercises using special apparatus, designed to improve physical strength, flexibility, and posture, and enhance mental awareness.



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