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Treating Pain Without Drugs

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A new federal report revealed that the majority of U.S. adults (more than 54 percent) had some type of musculoskeletal pain disorder such as back, joint or neck pain in 2012 (the latest year for which statistics are available).

Also revealing, people suffering from pain were significantly more likely to have used a complementary health approach compared to people without pain — nearly 42 percent versus 24 percent, respectively.

The reason wasn't addressed by the study, but time and again, conventional medicine fails to relieve many people's pain.

Research suggests, however, that these drugs work for only about three months, after which changes in your brain may lead to increased feelings of pain along with added emotional upset, including feelings of hopelessness and desperation.

Science-Backed Natural Pain Relief Options

A recent study published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings evaluated several complementary approaches for pain relief. The options that follow have been scientifically proven to help with relief, according to the report.

Acupuncture

One of the most common uses for acupuncture is in treating chronic pain. One analysis of the most robust studies available concluded that acupuncture has a clear effect in reducing chronic pain, more so than standard pain treatment.

Study participants receiving acupuncture reported an average 50 percent reduction in pain, compared to a 28 percent pain reduction for standard pain treatment without acupuncture. It's likely that acupuncture works via a variety of mechanisms.

Massage Therapy

A systematic review and meta-analysis, published in the journal Pain Medicine, included 60 high-quality and seven low-quality studies that looked into the use of massage for

various types of pain, including muscle and bone pain, headaches, deep internal pain, fibromyalgia pain and spinal cord pain.

Relaxation Techniques

Breathing exercises, guided imagery, meditation and other relaxation techniques may provide relief, especially from pain from tension headaches and migraines.

Research by an associate professor at Harvard Medical School, Dr. Herbert Benson, found that people who practice relaxation methods such as yoga and meditation long-term have more disease-fighting genes switched "on" and active, including genes that protect against pain and rheumatoid arthritis.

Exercise

Among people who had experienced back pain, those who exercised had a 25 percent to 40 percent lower risk of having another episode within a year than those who did no exercise.

Strength exercises, aerobics, flexibility training and stretching were all beneficial in lowering the risk of back pain.

Yoga, which is particularly useful for promoting flexibility and core muscles, has also been proven to be beneficial if you suffer from back pain.

Medical Marijuana

There are cannabinoid receptors in your brain, lungs, liver, kidneys, immune system and more. Both the therapeutic and psychoactive properties of marijuana occur when a cannabinoid activates a cannabinoid receptor.

Turmeric for Pain Relief

Turmeric was once most known for being a flavorful and colorful addition to curry, but in the scientific world, turmeric has earned a reputation for being a multi-faceted healer. Turmeric contains curcumin, which has notable anti-inflammatory properties.

It can inhibit both the activity and the synthesis of cyclooxygenase-2 (COX2) and 5-lipoxygenase (5-LOX), as well as other enzymes that have been implicated in inflammation.

A 2006 study found that a turmeric extract composed of curcuminoids (curcumin is the most investigated curcuminoid) blocked inflammatory pathways, effectively preventing the launch of a protein that triggers swelling and pain.

Turmeric has been found to significantly improve post-operative pain and fatigue, and in

a study of osteoarthritis patients, those who added only 200 milligrams (mg) of curcumin a day to their treatment plan had reduced pain and increased mobility.

Essential Oils for Pain Relief

Essential oils are concentrated, aromatic plant extracts that have been used for thousands of years for emotional, cosmetic, medical and even spiritual purposes. One of their most popular uses is also for relief of chronic and acute pain.

There are a number of ways to use essential oils, including via aromatherapy. Lavender aromatherapy, for instance, has been shown to lessen pain following needle insertion²¹ while green apple scent significantly relieves migraine pain. Other essential oils noted for pain relief, including relief from joint pain include:

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|------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| - Lavender | - Marjoram | - Indian Frankincense | - Myrrh |
| - Spruce | - Sandalwood | - Peppermint | - Tumeric |
| - Clove | - Fennel | - Orange | |
| - Ginger | - Boswellin | - Ginger | |

Homeopathy Also Found to Be Effective for Low Back Pain

Homeopathic solutions contain minuscule doses of plants, minerals, animal products or other compounds that cause symptoms similar to what you are already experiencing. The remedies have been diluted many times over, and the idea is that the substance will stimulate your body's own healing powers.

The number of patients using drugs to treat their back pain was cut in half after homeopathic treatments. It's best to work with an experienced homeopath to guide you in treatment for pain relief, however some common homeopathic remedies for back pain include:

✓ Aesculus, for dull pain with muscle weakness	✓ Arnica Montana, for pain as a result of trauma
✓ Gnaphalium, for sciatica that alternates with numbness	✓ Lycopodium, for burning pain, especially with gas or bloating
✓ Colocynthis, for weakness and cramping in the small of the back	✓ Rhus toxicodendron, for stiffness and pain in the small of the back

