

Break Free of CHRONIC PAIN

Natural Ways to Feel Much Better

by Kathleen Barnes

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 25 percent of Americans, or 76.2 million, are suffering from pain that lasts more than 24 hours at this very moment: Ouch!

Lower back pain alone keeps Americans from going to work a total of 149 million days each year, costing the U.S. economy \$100 to \$200 billion, reports the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Other common types of chronic pain affect musculoskeletal tissues, knees, hips or the neck. Migraines and severe headaches plague 16.6 percent of adults over 18, per a National Health and Nutrition Survey. Neurological discomfort can reach as high as 12.4 percent, estimates a study from the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minnesota. Even visceral or organ pain associated with heart disease, cancer and pelvic diseases occur in at least 20 percent of the global population, according to the International Association for the Study of Pain, in Seattle.

If chronic pain is affecting you, you feel it and want relief—right now.

Watch Out for Opioids

Unfortunately, conventional medicine often has little to offer most pain patients. Even for something as pervasive as back pain, surgery and steroid injections are usually an unsatisfactory first line of defense, having mixed results at best, seconded by prescriptions for addictive opioid painkillers.

Dr. Nora D. Vokov, director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse, told the U.S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control in 2014 that there were an estimated 2.1 million people in the U.S. suffering from substance abuse disorders related to prescription opioid pain relievers in 2012. The problem is worsening. Every day, 1,000 people are treated in emergency rooms for misusing prescription opioids, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Go Natural for Effective Relief

Such statistics expose the magnitude of the problem of chronic pain. “It’s daunting, but there are many natural ways to

address it that are inexpensive, effective and with what I call side benefits rather than negative side effects,” says Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, of Kona, Hawaii, author of the smartphone app *Cures A-Z*.

Complementary, integrative or functional medicine, all names for a holistic approach to health care, offer a comforting wealth of gentle ways to address chronic pain, most of which the vast majority of conventional medical doctors are unaware, says Daniel Cherkin, Ph.D., senior investigator emeritus with the Group Health Research Institute, at the University of Washington, in Seattle.

“Effective natural treatments include yoga, acupuncture, chiropractic, meditation, lifestyle changes and exercise,” notes Cherkin. “But since they’re not in most doctors’ medical training or learned repertoire for pain relief, patients aren’t offered the opportunity to try them.”

What Helps Relieve Pain

Here are just some of the many natural and affordable forms of pain relief.

Try the Yass method: Mitchell Yass, Ph.D., of St. John’s, Florida, author of *The Pain Cure Rx*, is busting the myth that musculoskeletal pain is often caused by osteoarthritis. “Arthritis or joint deterioration is rarely the cause of joint pain,” says Yass. He points out that 90 percent of people over 60 have herniated discs, but no associated pain.

Yass treats patients based on his observation that in up to 98 percent of the cases he sees, weak muscles are the underlying cause of joint pain, and strengthening them provides relief. He says his prescribed exercises are usually effective in days or a few weeks.

“Pain is an indication of tissue in distress. For example, pain in the shoulder area is often an impingement of the bicep,” he says. His prescription is strengthening exercises using hand weights for the trapezoid, tricep and serratus

anterior muscles. His book suggests a detailed self-diagnosis program and the necessary exercises to strengthen muscles and relieve joint pain (more at Tinyurl.com/YassIntroInfo).

Address underlying trauma: Osteopath Maud Nerman, of Novato, California, author of *Healing Pain and Injury*, has broad experience in treating neurological problems and brain injuries and often focuses on physical and emotional trauma as an underlying cause of chronic pain. She explains that the autonomic nervous system that directs unconscious body functions like breathing, digestion and heartbeat is interrupted by such trauma.

“Trauma literally shocks the nervous system,” she says. “The body cannot turn off the ‘fight-or-flight’ reaction, causing a firestorm of inflammation that can lead to a variety of serious diseases, overwhelming the body’s ability to manage its own healing.” Her work has showed how readjusting the body, restoring breathing and reactivating the autonomic nervous system can provide relief in short order.

Consider lifestyle, diet and supplements: “Pain is like the ‘check engine’ light on a car’s dashboard. It signals that something needs attention,” says Teitelbaum, author of *Pain Free 1-2-3*. “If the ‘check engine’ light goes on, putting a Band-Aid over it or smashing it with a hammer won’t help.”

Teitelbaum recommends an energy optimization approach he dubs SHINE that addresses underlying causes of chronic pain that has worked for 91 percent of the people he’s treated for fibromyalgia and muscle pain.

Sleep—Eight to nine hours a night helps replenish energy and heal muscles.

Hormones—Treat hormone imbalances even if lab tests are “normal”.

Immunity—Dysfunctional immune systems and persistent infections can lead to chronic pain.

Nutrition—In Teitelbaum’s studies, optimizing nutritional support, especially B vitamins, vitamin D, ribose, coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) and magnesium, was helpful. A healthy, high

YOGIC BREATHING BRINGS RELIEF

An ancient yogic breathing practice, or *pranayama*, is used to rebalance the autonomic nervous system.

Dr. Maud Nerman strongly recommends alternate nostril breathing for those that experience chronic pain caused by physical or emotional trauma.

Here’s a basic practice:

- After folding the middle two fingers of the right hand down, press the right nostril closed.
- Inhale to the count of four.
- Hold both nostrils closed for a count of eight.
- Release the right nostril and exhale to a count of eight.
- Repeat on the other side.
- Continue for at least three minutes, alternating sides throughout.



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protein, low sugar diet is effectively complemented by a variety of herbs and nutrients, primarily curcumin, boswellia, willow bark and fish oil, nutrients that widespread studies show stop pain better than pharmaceuticals. He's also a strong proponent of eliminating sugar entirely because it causes inflammation.

Exercise—Daily exercise speeds the healing process and after 10 weeks following the first four SHINE steps, will increase the capacity to exercise.

For migraines, Teitelbaum advocates vitamin B₂ (riboflavin). Numerous studies support the effectiveness of dosages of 400 milligrams per day to prevent migraines. After just six weeks of use, a German study published in the *European Journal of Neurology* shows that taking a daily riboflavin supplement cut the number of migraine days in half for participants and significantly reduced the amount of migraine medication needed.

Tap for Relief: Also known as the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), Tapping Solutions founder Nick Ortner, of Newtown, Connecticut, says "Tapping sends a calming signal to the amygdala in the brain, turning off the fight or flight stress response and allowing the body to heal." **The physical tapping opens up the body's energy meridians and allows them to relax so the natural healing process can take place, Ortner explains.**

EFT combines tapping on specific body points while repeating appropriate affirmative statements such as: **"Even though I have this [pain], I love, accept and forgive myself."**

He recalls a woman that arrived at a seminar he led with a toothache that had lasted for years. Doctors had done X-rays, seen an infection and prescribed antibiotics to no good effect. He asked her if she recalled when the pain began; without hesitation, she answered, "When my mother passed away unexpectedly."

"So we started working together and the pain reduced significantly right away and eventually disappeared completely," says Ortner. A follow-up with her dentist showed no sign of the former problem.

Up to now, the EFT research is

positive. One study from the Energy Medicine University, in Mill Valley, California, found it helped people with chronic pain (some coping with severe fatigue and fibromyalgia) feel physically and emotionally better in as little as a month; another from the Foundation for Epigenetic Medicine, in Santa Rosa, California, showed substantially reduced trauma in institutionalized abused teenagers after just one EFT session.

Meditation vs. Medication:

Meditation may not resolve the underlying cause of chronic pain, but research from the University of Alabama demonstrates it can interrupt pain signals to the brain. It's at least as effective as opioid painkillers in relieving chronic pain, according to a study led by Cherkin at the University of Washington.

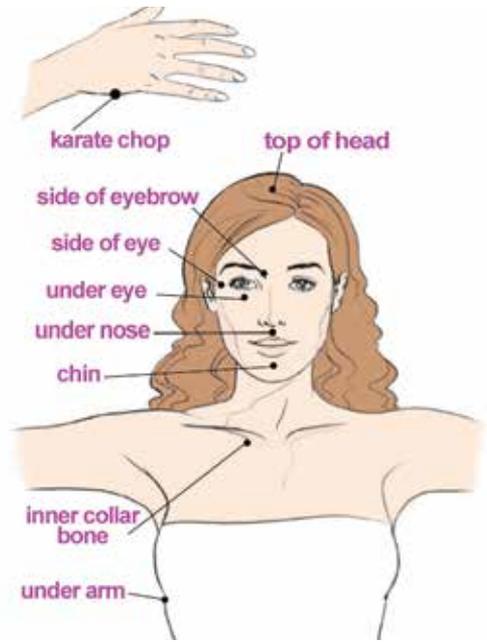
His team's 342 subjects that had experienced back pain weekly for at least a year were offered either eight meditation and yoga classes, eight cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) sessions or just keeping up their own regular daily routines that did not include yoga and meditation. The results, recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, confirm what numerous other studies have reported: 44 percent experienced a "meaningful reduction" in pain within six months of the meditation or CBT sessions, equal to results reported by people taking addictive opioid pharmaceuticals. More, the pain relief continued for up to two years, even if the subjects stopped doing actual sitting meditation.

"Meditation changes the way people think about pain and how they develop skills to keep it from becoming a major focus in their lives," observes Cherkin.

Regardless of the mechanism, experts in a holistic approach to chronic pain relief agree that encouraging self-control, self-determination and self-empowerment makes a huge difference in patients' abilities to control pain more naturally and effectively.

Kathleen Barnes is author of numerous natural health books, including Our Toxic World: A Survivor's Guide. Connect at KathleenBarnes.com.

HOW TO TAP AWAY PAIN



Tapping, or Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), soothes the body by turning off the "fight or flight" stress response that can cause inflammation and worsen pain, according to Tapping Solutions founder, Nick Ortner, of Newtown, Connecticut. Here's how to do it

- 1 Identify the problem (e.g., pain in back of neck).
- 2 Rate the intensity of feelings about the problem on a scale of one to 10.
- 3 Compose a statement about it (e.g., "Even though I have intense neck pain today, I deeply and completely accept myself.").
- 4 Using one or two fingers on one hand, tap the "karate chop" area on the outer edge of the other hand while repeating the statement three times.
- 5 While repeating, e.g., "intense neck pain," using firm, but gentle pressure, use either two or four fingers to tap these areas, on either side, five to seven times in sequences as follows:
 - side of eyebrow
 - side of eye
 - under eye
 - under nose
 - chin
 - inner collarbone
 - under arm
 - top of head
- 6 Refocus on the original problem and rate its intensity. Restate what you're feeling, as needed.

Source: The Tapping Solution for Pain Relief, by Nick Ortner; instructional video at Tinyurl.com/JessicaOrtnerTapping.