

Alternatives to Prescription Painkillers That Virtually Every Physician Should Know

Eliminate or radically reduce most grains and sugars from your diet

Avoiding grains and sugars will lower your insulin and leptin levels and decrease insulin and leptin resistance, which is one of the most important reasons why inflammatory prostaglandins are produced. That is why stopping sugar and sweets is so important to controlling your pain and other types of chronic illnesses.

Take a high-quality, animal-based omega-3 fat

My personal favorite is krill oil. Omega-3 fats are precursors to mediators of inflammation called prostaglandins. (In fact, that is how anti-inflammatory painkillers work, by manipulating prostaglandins.)

Optimize your production of vitamin D

Optimize your vitamin D by getting regular, appropriate sun exposure, which will work through a variety of different mechanisms to reduce your pain.

Medical cannabis

Medical marijuana has a long history as a natural analgesic. Its medicinal qualities are due to high amounts (up to 20 percent) of cannabidiol (CBD), medicinal terpenes and flavonoids. Varieties of cannabis exist that are very low in tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) — the psychoactive component of marijuana that makes you feel "stoned" — and high in medicinal CBD.

Medical marijuana is now legal in 28 states. You can learn more about the laws in your state on medicalmarijuana.procon.org

Kratom

Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*) is another plant remedy that has become a popular opioid substitute.²² In August, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued a notice saying it was planning to ban kratom, listing it as Schedule 1 controlled substance.

However, following massive outrage from kratom users who say opioids are their only alternative, the agency reversed its decision.²³

Kratom is likely safer than an opioid for someone in serious and chronic pain. However, it's important to recognize that it is a psychoactive substance and should not be used carelessly. There's very little research showing how to use it safely and effectively, and it may have a very different effect from one person to the next.

Also, while it may be useful for weaning people off opioids, kratom is in itself addictive. So, while it appears to be a far safer alternative to opioids, it's still a powerful and potentially addictive substance. So please, do your own research before trying it.

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT)

EFT is a drug-free approach for pain management of all kinds. EFT borrows from the principles of acupuncture in that it helps you balance out your subtle energy system. It helps resolve underlying, often subconscious, and negative emotions that may be exacerbating your physical pain.

By stimulating (tapping) well-established acupuncture points with your fingertips, you rebalance your energy system, which tends to dissipate pain.

Among volunteers who had never meditated before, those who attended four 20-minute classes to learn a meditation technique called focused attention (a form of mindfulness meditation), experienced significant pain relief — a 40 percent reduction in pain intensity and a 57 percent reduction in pain unpleasantness.²⁴

K-Laser, Class 4 Laser Therapy

If you suffer pain from an injury, arthritis, or other inflammation-based pain, I'd strongly encourage you to try out K-Laser therapy. It can be an excellent choice for many painful conditions, including acute injuries. By addressing the underlying cause of the pain, you will no longer need to rely on painkillers

K-Laser is a class 4 infrared laser therapy treatment that helps reduce pain, reduce inflammation, and enhance tissue healing — both in hard and soft tissues, including muscles, ligaments or even bones. The infrared wavelengths used in the K-Laser allow for targeting specific areas of your body and can penetrate deeply into the body to reach areas such as your spine and hip.

Chiropractic

Many studies have confirmed that chiropractic management is much safer and less expensive than allopathic medical treatments, especially when used for pain such as low back pain.

Qualified chiropractic, osteopathic and naturopathic physicians are reliable, as they have received extensive training in the management of musculoskeletal disorders during their course of graduate healthcare training, which lasts between four to six years. These health experts have comprehensive training in musculoskeletal management.

Acupuncture

Research has discovered a "clear and robust" effect of acupuncture in the treatment of back, neck and shoulder pain, osteoarthritis and headaches.

Physical therapy

Physical therapy has been shown to be as good as surgery for painful conditions such as torn cartilage and arthritis.

Massage

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.²⁵

The review revealed that massage therapy relieves pain better than getting no treatment at all. When compared to other pain treatments like acupuncture and physical therapy, massage therapy still proved beneficial and had few side effects. In addition to relieving pain, massage therapy also improved anxiety and health-related quality of life.

Astaxanthin

Astaxanthin is one of the most effective fat-soluble antioxidants known. It has very potent anti-inflammatory properties and in many cases works far more effectively than anti-inflammatory drugs. Higher doses are typically required and you may need 8 milligrams (mg) or more per day to achieve this benefit.

Ginger

This herb has potent anti-inflammatory activity and offers pain relief and stomach-settling properties. Fresh ginger works well steeped in boiling water as a tea or grated into vegetable juice.

Curcumin

In a study of osteoarthritis patients, those who added 200 milligrams (mg) of curcumin a day to their treatment plan had reduced pain and increased mobility. A past study also found that a turmeric extract composed of curcuminoids blocked inflammatory pathways, effectively preventing the overproduction of a protein that triggers swelling and pain.²⁶

Boswellia

Also known as boswellin or "Indian frankincense," this herb contains specific active anti-inflammatory ingredients. This is one of my personal favorites as I have seen it work well with many rheumatoid arthritis patients.

Bromelain

This enzyme, found in pineapples, is a natural anti-inflammatory. It can be taken in supplement form but eating fresh pineapple, including some of the bromelain-rich stem, may also be helpful.

Cetyl Myristoleate (CMO)

This oil, found in fish and dairy butter, acts as a "joint lubricant" and an anti-inflammatory. I have used this for myself to relieve ganglion cysts and a mildly annoying carpal tunnel syndrome that pops up when I type too much on non-ergonomic keyboards. I used a topical preparation for this.

Evening Primrose, Black Currant and Borage Oils

These contain the essential fatty acid gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), which is useful for treating arthritic pain.

Cayenne Cream

Also called capsaicin cream, this spice comes from dried hot peppers. It alleviates pain by depleting the body's supply of substance P, a chemical component of nerve cells that transmits pain signals to your brain.

Methods such as yoga, Foundation Training, acupuncture, exercise, meditation, hot and cold packs and mind-body techniques can also result in astonishing pain relief without any drugs.

Grounding

Walking barefoot on the earth may also provide a certain measure of pain relief by combating inflammation.

ESSENTIAL OILS are particularly useful in the management of chronic pain as in the case of arthritis and sciatica. But there is so much more and the categories of pain sources are listed below.

Antirheumatic – brings relief from chronic rheumatic pain and stiffness of the joints

Antimicrobial – action against disease-causing bacteria and other microorganisms; it is useful in treating pain resulting from sinus congestion, stomach infections, and boils.

Sedative – a mild tranquilizing effect that reduces irritability and discomfort resulting from aches and pains

Anesthetic – a temporary loss of sensation or numbing of the affected area; it can reduce the intensity of pain while healing takes place.

Carminative – reduces gas formation and accumulation in the gastrointestinal tract; beneficial in reducing stomach ache and cramps.

Decongestant – Facilitates drainage in the upper respiratory tract; relieves headaches from nasal and sinus congestion resulting from colds and allergies.

Anti-inflammatory – reduces inflammation and swelling often associated with joint pain and muscle injuries

Antispasmodic – disrupts painful muscle contractions or spasms which often result from injuries to the nerves and spine and helps relieve lower back pains. Antispasmodic action can relieve abdominal pains, especially in those with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Antidepressant – helps treat not just depression but a number of related conditions, including neuropathic pain, migraine, and chronic pain.

Some of the pain-relieving essential oils can be mixed together to get the benefit of their combined action.

Lavender, Chamomile, Peppermint, Eucalyptus, Rosemary, Juniper, Wintergreen, Cayenne, Ginger, Sandalwood, Clary sage, Clove, Marjoram, Yarrow, Helichrysum