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NATURAL PAIN MANAGEMENT

— A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR SELF-HELP

By Teresa King Copyright 2005

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Part-I: Introduction

1. Natural Pain Management – An Introduction

Pain Management refers to all different ways of decreasing, preventing, reducing, or stopping pain in any part of your body. You may suffer from pain due to any physical injury or due to certain chronic illness. No doubt, pain dampens your spirits, restricts your physical mobility and your total health suffers. Hence, pain management helps address your pain by attacking the source of pain and lessen or remove the cause of your pain. This helps you lead a normal and healthy life again.

Pain can be either chronic or acute. Chronic pain continues to be present for months. Such pain is common in serious illness like cancer or due to degeneration of nerves. Acute pain is normally due to injury of specific body parts and will heal, and then stop hurting.

You or rather your brain, understands that a particular part of your body is in pain through your nervous system. Your nerves in afflicted parts of your body will send messages to your brain through various receptors. Depending on the intensity of the pain, your body releases certain endorphins or natural painkillers. If pain persists even after release of such endorphins, your body part suffers inflammation. This then needs stronger medication.

Pain Management is therefore a combination of different remedial measures to combat the cause of your pain and relieve you of such pain. It could, therefore include pharmacological and nonpharmacological therapies and surgeries. The main aim of pain management is to identify the cause of pain and remove it from your system.

Pharmacological Options are nothing other than specific painkillers or relievers- analgesics. Most of these are available over-the-counter and are often the first medicines for relieving your pain. Common painkillers of this category are ibuprofen, aspirin, ketoprofen, and naproxen sodium. These medicines prevent your pain from advancing into next stage of inflammation. Such pharmacological medicines can provide relief within little time. However, chronic pain needs higher and stronger dosages as your body develops a strong tolerance to the medications you are using. Your body will need more of the "drug" to relieve the chronic pain.

Certain specific narcotics and antidepressants, though falling under the drugs category, are effective against chronic pain in cancer patients. You can take such drugs only with a doctor's prescription. Normally, all drugs need to be in accordance with their dosage as otherwise, it can cause irreparable damage to your organs.

When you use pain medication, you can burden your body with toxins that can in some cases destroy your liver.

You can also use nonpharmacological options to cure your pain. Such options include non-drug therapies like meditation, yoga, physical exercises, acupuncture and visiting a chiropractor. Surgical remedies could be augmentative, anatomic, and ablative. Surgery is the last resort to relieve your pain and normally you would undergo surgery if noninvasive procedures do not yield any results. Besides, you need to identify the source of your pain accurately to have surgery at a particular place. Normally pain management techniques relieve your pain but could cause certain side effects in certain people.

2. What is Pain?

Pain is a sensation, feeling, or rather physical knowledge of certain discomfort and unpleasantness. Pain is due to one or more injuries to body parts or because of certain illnesses. You feel pain and most pain will be at the center of where the damage is. But not all. Some pain is deceptive, such as a ruptured disk in your neck can generate down your arm. When I ruptured the disk in my neck, I woke up with a crick in my arm, much like a crick in your neck, but it was in my arm, and my hand and fingers felt terribly numb, and the pain was unbearable.

I'd have sworn on my dying breath that there was nothing wrong with my neck. However, most pain that a person gets does center on the area of the body that has damage.

Causes

Causes of pain could be injuries, illness, or depression. Acute pain could be due to breaking of a bone, burning of tissue, muscular cramps, headaches, and other pain that drives a person into body agony. You perceive pain through the sensory nerves of your nervous system. Some sensory nerves reflecting your pain are nociceptors. These nociceptors could be -

1. Thermo receptive to perceive extreme temperatures and associated pain
2. Mechano receptive reflects pain due to pressure
3. Polymodal reflects pain due to temperature and pressure.

Nerve cell endings in receptors sense pain and transfer messages to your brain and spinal cord through various transmitters of nerves. These then, stimulate nerves at the place of injury or pain. Thereafter, cells in affected parts release chemicals to combat pain. These gauge intensity and duration of pain.

Chronic pain is due to illnesses. Continued stimulation of nociceptors cause changes in the nervous system and chronic pain affects you without any particular stimulus.

Changes in your nervous system are the cause for chronic and abnormal pain like hyperalgesia and allodynia.

3. Describing Your Pain

You need to describe your pain so that your doctors understand the cause of your pain and provide the necessary remedy. Organize your pain accordingly -

Location: The place where it hurts, whether pain moves from one point or is at particular spot

Time: When do you experience pain? Such as always, or after, or before mealtimes? Do you feel pain while doing specific jobs? Does pain respond to touch or do you find relief while standing or changing positions?

Start: Did your pain start suddenly or gradually? Is it a constant or intermittent pain? Does it recur in minutes or after many hours?

Describe your pain as cramping, crushing, sharp, burning, shooting, or stabbing; does it awaken you from your sleep?

Rate your pain on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is no pain and 10 is acute pain.

When you go to your doctor, it is very easy to forget what to tell or ask him or her. It is best to write your questions and symptoms on paper before your appointment and take it with you. This is important, especially for men. Most men do not like to go to the doctor much, and are rather noncommittal when they tell their doctors their symptoms. The best thing you can do is put it on paper, so that you remember what to ask and also what to tell your doctor.

Do it!

4. Pain Theory - The Mechanism of Chronic Pain

The mechanism of chronic pain is still an unexplored area. There are two theories explaining the process of pain and its occurrence- Gate Control and Loesser’s 'Onion.'

Gate Control theory is more impressive although it does not explain the whole process.

Gate Control

Groups of nerve fibers on the nerve pathway should allow passage of pain sensation to reach and inform the brain. These group fibers are gates. If at any gate, there is sufficient stimulus; it will prevent further passage of pain sensation to brain. There is no solid justification of this theory. Except, you find relief from pain through specific stimuli like rubbing or acupuncture. These back up Gate Control theory.

Loesser’s 'Onion'

This theory explains the pain mechanism as a layered one, as in an onion. Each layer refers to particular stimuli like nerve stimulus, pain perception, suffering pain behavior, and environmental interaction. This theory is more recent than Gate Control.

However, current pain theory considers both these theories and presents pain mechanism in three steps –

1. Hurt body part
2. Spinal cord

3. Brain

Nerve fibers at each step can reduce or stop further passage of pain.

Pain cannot be in any single category such as physical, psychological, etc. Pain is just an amalgamation of all physical, psychological, and environmental factors and your brain perceives pain wherever and whenever there is application of any painful stimuli.

5. Causes, Affects and Symptoms of Pain

Pain is the most common symptom of any injury or disease. Pain can be mild, bearable, or intense depending on various factors like the nature or location of pain. You don't like pain, but without it, you'd be in a lot of danger; such as: putting your hand on a hot burner. You could burn through your skin and not even know it. Pain perception depends on the pain location. Stimuli for pain differs depending on location. A prick on your skin can cause pain while it may have no effect on your intestines. Intestinal pain can be caused from inflammation, swelling, blockages and gas.

Diagnosis of Pain

Diagnosing pain is difficult unless you correlate it with other factors and symptoms. External injury clearly points to location of pain like a broken bone, a cut wound, etc. Internal pain poses difficulties in diagnosing. You need to question a patient to understand its intensity. It is also a subjective feeling and depends on the individual's endurance limits. You can gauge an estimate by questioning the location of pain, how long it has been present, how intermittently it occurs, and any variations in its occurrence or frequencies, nature, and intensity.

Sometimes pain occurs at a different place, very much disconnected and faraway from the site of injury. Fluid accumulation at the base of the lung can cause pain at your shoulder. Lower back pains do not have any causes. At other times, fever and nausea also prevent you from ascertaining location and cause of pain.

I was shocked to find out that the excruciating pain in my arm was caused by a ruptured disk in my neck. A neck which did not hurt at all.

There are no diagnostic tests to determine or locate pain and record its intensity.

6. Fear, Anxiety, and Pain

Fear and anxiety accelerate pain and cause increased discomfort. When you are anxious, it triggers your mental responses and you feel more pain. The best recourse is to destress your nerves and play soothing music and restore your mood by looking to the positive side of everything that you can.

Yoga pumps in extra oxygen and blood into your brain, thereby lowering pain and discomfort. You can also try other distracting techniques like reading a book or concentrating on some other task that focuses your attention away from your pain.

Once your pain subsides, go slow and do not rush into any physical activity. Allow your body to regain posture and restore its normal self. After that, start with any activity you want to do.

7. Natural Pain Modulation

Pain in any form is only a messenger of inherent disease; it is never the disease itself. Pain is therefore due to certain imbalances in your body. You seek remedial measures to cure your pain. Most often, you need to identify the source of pain to understand the cause of pain. Only thereafter, you can address your pain and seek relief through proper remedies.

Natural pain modulation refers to natural or naturally occurring remedies to cure your ailments. Such natural remedies do not address only pain or its cause; they rather address your total physiologic system and cure your pain accordingly. It therefore also addresses your physical and mental build-up and changes your perspective of pain.

Natural pain modulation methods and techniques are for the most part from plants and other natural sources. Naturopathy attributes pain to be due to improper eating, lack of sufficient exercise or natural air, excess, or lack of sufficient and nutritious diet. Naturopathy doctors lay greater stress on such natural elements like sunshine, fresh air, a diet rich in vegetables and fruits, optimistic attitude, and sufficient relaxation through meditation and yoga.

Such simple habits provide a solid background for your health and you are able to fight minor ailments. These are not the total remedies but contribute largely to building and maintaining your general health to sustain side effects of other chemical pain relievers. If you rely on different prescription painkillers to relieve your pain, you could suffer from many side effects of such prolonged use. It also leads to immunity against such medicines over a period of time.

Your body can get used to the drugs that you use for pain and as time goes by you will need more of the drug. Some people can become addicted to their drugs that are prescribed for pain. Therefore, doctors are reluctant to prescribe them to their patients, and most doctors will have you sign a disclaimer, acknowledging that if you become dependent on the drug, that you've been well informed and they will accept no liability for such addiction that may happen to you.

Natural Regulation through your Diet

You need to provide your tissues with good quality food to develop them. Healthy tissues need proteins, fats, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins in sufficient quantities and at proper intervals. Diet regulation is of paramount importance. Excessive carbohydrates lower or stop insulin metabolism, resulting in weight gain.

Someone whose intake of protein is inadequate is likely to find their body becomes incapable of repairing its tissues and also to suffer from decreased cognitive function, decreased bone mass, prolonged healing of wounds, impaired muscle use, etc. Excessive intake of foods rich in omega 6 fatty acids leads to serious diseases of circulatory organs. Lack of sufficient vitamins and minerals is the cause of different gastrointestinal diseases, malabsorption syndromes, and chronic or acute infections.

Natural beneficial agents present in vegetables and fruits

Proteolytic Enzymes have strong analgesic effects. They can reduce inflammation and pain effects of different pain-sensing nerves in your body. Such proteolytic enzymes are present in Bromelain, which is present in fruit

and the stem of pineapple. It reduces protein degradation in inflamed areas and produces a prostaglandin with anti-inflammatory properties.

Bromelain can cause minor side effects like stomach upsets or slight diarrhea. These over-rule positive effects of such enzymes, which reduces joint stiffness, tenderness, pain, and swelling in osteoarthritis patients. Bromelain is also effective for injuries of the musculoskeletal system. It increases fibrin production, thereby improving circulation and reducing inflammatory substances responsible for muscular and skeletal pains.

Herbal Medicines as Painkillers

Certain herbs contain different sedative, anti-inflammatory, analgesic and anxiolytic properties. A combination of these herbs can reduce your pain over a period of time. Certain useful herbs are:

Piscidia erythrina (Jamaican dogwood)

This is the bark of a particular tree in the West Indies and America and can cure toothache, smooth muscle spasm, migraine, and pain in the uterus and gastrointestinal system. This herb has natural pesticide properties and disrupts oxygen consumption in cold-blooded animals. Hence, this herb in small quantities is an effective painkiller.

Eschscholzia californica (California poppy) and Corydalis cava (Corydalis)

These two plants cure pain of skeletal muscles, nerves, etc. California poppy can cure insomnia, bed-wetting in children, stress, and other bladder disorders.

Zingiber officinale (Ginger)

Ginger has various properties including antifungal, antipyretic, sedative, antibiotic, antitussive, and analgesic. It inhibits inflammation and speeds up healing of wounds.

Although natural medicines are helpful in combating pain, they are not usually regarded as cures. You can supplement it with minor prescription pain medicines. Natural pain modulation aims at treating pain with regulated diet and natural medicines.

Part-II: Natural Management of Some Common Chronic Pain Conditions

8. Arthritis

Arthritis is mainly a disease inflicting swelling and pain in joints of knees or elbows. Sometimes arthritis also causes pain or redness in the chest, eyes, or occurs as a rash on your skin. Overall, arthritis causes pain and discomfort with normal body movements.

Types of Arthritis

The most common types of arthritis are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Osteoarthritis is of common occurrence in the elderly due to eroding of joints in fingers, knees, hips, etc. It could also be due to any injury to bones in the past.

Rheumatoid arthritis is due to your own immune system working against your body organs and affecting your bones and joints.

Arthritis can also occur due to –

- **Lupus** when the defense system of your body afflicts vital body organs like the heart, kidneys, skin, etc.
- **Gout** or accumulation of crystals in joints.
- **Viral hepatitis** of your liver could cause arthritis.

Symptoms of Arthritis

Although joint pain is the most common symptom, other additional factors of arthritis could be –

- Regular loss of weight
- Constant fever
- Body itches or rashes
- Breathing troubles

Some of these symptoms can due to other illnesses. Hence, you need to consult a reputed orthopedist to diagnose your disease.

How do Doctors diagnose your arthritis?

Doctors take x-rays of bones and joints, and use blood tests to ascertain if you have arthritis and what kind. Doctors normally prescribe medicines and creams for external application of affected areas. You can seek medical help if creams cause rashes or burning sensations. You can reduce your pain by taking a warm shower, resting sore joints, do some gentle stretching exercises, or by using ice packs on the affected area.

Prevention is better than Cure

Although arthritis causes a continuant degenerating effect on bones, you can prevent arthritis through certain techniques:

- Regular exercise involving moving all joints as in swimming and walking.
- Control your weight and keep your weight as close to normal as possible.
- A warm shower in the mornings keeps arthritis at bay.
- Regular checkups with your doctor and regular intake of medicines can reduce stiffness and joint pain a great deal.

9. Back Pain

Back Pain is a common ailment. Your lower back provides maximum support to your skeletal framework through various bones, muscles, and ligaments of the vertebral column. Additionally, nerves and joints at strategic points help in smooth movement of the spine.



Causes of Back Pain

There are many reasons for the occurrence of back pain. The most common among them is wrong posture. You slump in awkward positions and bend your body in all directions.

Lifting weights without bending your knees can cause sprains, torn ligaments and strains muscles. Back pain can also be due to injuries to bones and ligaments

in sports and other physical activities. Other causes include congenital disorders, arthritis, psychological problems, and obesity. Sometimes back pain is due to internal disorders like kidney infections, kidney stones, bone loss, blood clots, and even gas.

Diagnosis of Back Pain

X-ray examinations can explain the cause of back pain to a certain extent and sometimes you need a complete MRI, where they put you in a tunnel and can get a better view of what is causing the pain.

Treatment for Back Pain

Normally bed rest provides good relief for back pain. However, physical therapy and exercise could improve your back pain better than resting. Doctors advise starting exercise immediately when you feel acute back pain. A single day's bed rest is sufficient and you can cure your back pain with further exercise. Doctors stress specific back exercises for your abdominal and back muscles to strengthen them and increase their flexibility. Back pain is due to drying up of disks of your vertebral column. Therefore, exercise keep disks hydrated. You also need to have sufficient intake of water and other fluids.

Hot water packs in winter and ice packs in summer bring immense relief of back pain. You need to understand what induces your back pain like bending forward, lifting, or carrying weight, lowering your neck, etc. Accordingly, you can exercise and work on improving your posture to gain relief from back pain. Non-prescription pills can cure simple cases of back pain. Surgery for curing back pain is only appropriate when it affects you seriously.

10. Chronic Headache

Although a headache is a common ailment, headaches can be chronic, migraine, or tension headaches. Causes of migraine headaches differ greatly and therefore remedies are subjective and there is no single and same remedy for all migraine sufferers.



Causes and Remedies for Chronic Headache

Although caffeine provides effective relief from headaches, excess caffeine causes headaches. If you suffer from regular headaches, you need to avoid coffee and certain sodas. It helps many people to have a cup of coffee with their aspirin for faster relief.

Unfortunately, caffeine is addictive.

Once you are used to drinking coffee everyday, if you do not have it, you'll get a headache. Some people are

sensitive to certain foods or drinks. Hence, eating or drinking such items could trigger a headache. Chemicals present in those foods cause blood vessels in the brain to expand.

One huge cause of migraine that you do not hear much about is diet soda when they use **aspartame** as a sweetener. **Aspartame** has many effects that you may not know that you are getting from the use of too much of it, or just a little

for some people. Soda can cause kidney stones, which can give you tremendous lower back pain, too.

Tobacco causes headaches and the best remedy for headaches is to avoid tobacco.

Erratic mealtimes and skipping of meals could cause headaches. Hence, stick to a regular schedule of food intake to avoid headaches.

A good night’s sleep is the best solution for your headache. Staying up late or reducing your total sleep time disrupts your body mechanism. This causes a headache. Hence, sleep for a minimum of eight hours at a regular time to avoid headaches. Sometimes oversleeping also causes headaches.

Staying outdoors in the sun could trigger a headache. Exercising in the sun leads to headaches. You lose immense amounts of fluids through perspiration. Hence, you need to drink plenty of water and fluids to keep your body hydrated. Additionally keep eyes shaded. You lose electrolytes, such as salt and potassium when you perspire.

If you tie your hair tightly at the back, it causes headaches. Hence, keep your hair loose and massage inner blood vessels in circular movements to gain relief from headaches. Many women with thick heavy hair can actually have the weight of their hair causing their headaches.

Stress is another important cause leading to chronic headaches. Avoid physical and mental stress to be free of headaches.



Maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular eating, exercising, and other habits to avoid headaches. Despite all medications, if your headache persists, it is best to seek medical diagnosis and treatment from a qualified medical professional.

Nutritional supplements with a combination of magnesium, riboflavin and a few other supplements can be an effective remedy.

11. Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a specific condition with pain in the tendons, muscles, and ligaments, usually with mental fatigue and sleep disturbances. Although you cannot pinpoint any specific cause for fibromyalgia, it is a prelude for chronic fatigue syndrome. Fibromyalgia affects around 5% of world’s population and majority of fibromyalgia sufferers are women.

Symptoms of Fibromyalgia

Common symptoms of fibromyalgia are -

- Excessive fatigue
- Sleep disturbances
- Chest pain
- Morning stiffness
- Painful menstruation
- Numbness and tingling sensations
- Cognitive or memory impairment
- Swollen extremities
- Skin sensitivities
- Irritable bladder

- Dizziness
- Muscle twitching
- Headaches
- Irritable bowel
- Dry eyes and mouth, and
- Impaired coordination
- Total body weakness due to excessive heat or cold causes stress, anxiety, and depression in many fibromyalgia patients.

Diagnosis of Fibromyalgia

There is no specific pathological examination or conclusion to determine existence of fibromyalgia. Without any specific cause, it is difficult for patients to understand the cause of the ailment. Many medical experts believe that fibromyalgia is a result of previous viral infection. Medical professionals suspect that the ailment is inborn in the patient but comes to the fore when there is any major stressor like a traumatic accident, serious illness, etc.

Treatment for Fibromyalgia

Just as there is no specific cause for fibromyalgia, there is no single successful treatment for fibromyalgia. Treatments are similar to that for chronic pain-muscle relaxants, physical therapy, pain relief, anti-inflammatory medications, relaxation therapy, etc.

Not all these treatments provide total relief from the ailment; they only act as catalysts. They can reduce your suffering to bearable limits. You need to accept some discomfort as part of your life and get along with life. Moreover, such treatments are subjective and depend more on your determination and desire to ease your pain.

Most treatments for fibromyalgia are temporary. Yoga provides good relief as it helps to push away negativity and induces optimism. Besides, different yoga postures release redundant energy from the body and these physical exercises tire you and help you get undisturbed sleep at night.

12. Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Irritable bowel syndrome is a functional disorder of your bowel. It is not easy to diagnose irritable bowel syndrome, as symptoms are common to various ailments. Nerves and muscles in the bowel are extra sensitive. Therefore, muscles contract excessively while eating and cause cramping or diarrhea immediately after meals. Alternatively, sensitive nerves could stretch the bowel.

Symptoms of Irritable bowel syndrome

Common symptoms are -

- Painful constipation or diarrhea, or both
- Excessive pain
- Swollen abdomen
- Mucus in stool
- Feeling of incomplete bowel movement

Diagnosis of Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Medical experts are of the opinion that if you feel relieved of your abdominal pain by defecating and have regular changes in your stool frequencies for over three months you suffer from irritable bowel syndrome.

However, symptoms of lactose intolerance are also similar to that of irritable bowel syndrome. Hence, you need to exclude all milk products to recognize your ailment.

Treatment for Irritable Bowel Syndrome

There is no permanent cure for Irritable Bowel Syndrome. You can use antispasmodic medications and stay away from specific foods causing such bowel movements. Sometimes, such irritable bowel movements are the result of certain emotional disturbances. Hence, maintain a table to record your feelings, food intakes, exercise, activities, and other symptoms to understand your bowel movements and control them effectively.

13. Joint Aches

Joint aches are common occurrences in most people. Such joint aches could be osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, muscular aches, cramps in legs, muscle tension, etc. Pain and stiffness in joints is due to loss of cartilage in joints. Loss could be due to degeneration of tissues or sometimes your body’s immune system wrongly attacks your joints and causes tissue loss.

Remedies for Joint Aches

You can take **Glucosamine** and **Chondroitin** to reduce stiffness in your knees and joints. **Chondroitin** calls for larger dosages as your body finds it difficult to absorb this medicine.

Fish oil and similar oils provide relief from joint aches.

Your body can also produce certain compounds to reduce your pain and inflammation at the joints.

There are certain external application creams which provide relief only after repeated applications. You could experience itching or stinging initially and, over time, the repeated use of these creams may reduce the chemical sensation of your nerve endings at that particular place.

Vitamin C helps build your muscles and cartilage. Hence, it is beneficial for athletes to reduce muscular damage due to harsh exercise.

Mineral supplements can spruce up your magnesium and calcium deficiencies.

Regular workouts with a sensible diet can build up your body and keep away muscular pains and spasms.

Herbal medicines do provide relief from joint aches. However, these gentle medicines take time to show results. You need to take strong allopathic medicines to curb your sharp joint aches and then continue with such mild herbal medicines. These natural herbs have hardly any side-effects, which incidentally is widespread among most allopathic medicines.

Bromelain pills containing pineapple enzymes are helpful in reducing anti-inflammatory symptoms and improve overall health.

You cannot use most joint-ache medicines for long periods as they cause serious side effects. Overdoses could lead to gastrointestinal disorders and ulcers. Hence, take advice from your doctor to arrive at the correct combination of natural remedies to get relief from your joint aches.

14. Menopause

Menopause is a new phase in a woman’s life and brings about marked changes in her physical and mental well-being. You suddenly encounter hot flashes, sleep disturbances, depressive moods, irritability, headaches, excessive sweating and flushing. Some of these conditions call for medical interventions for efficient management of such menopausal symptoms and help you lead a normal life.

Effective management of Menopausal symptoms with natural remedies

Black Cohosh: This natural supplement is effective against menopausal symptoms. This herbal remedy has hardly any side effects and you can easily overcome most menopausal symptoms like hot flashes, mood changes, and sweating. Black Cohosh provides substantial benefits over **estrogen replacement therapy**. Black Cohosh is more like **estriol**, which is a type of estrogen found in your body. Estriol helps maintain bone density and removes cholesterol deposits from blood. Take recommended dosages of Black Cohosh to reduce declining progesterone levels, maintain general well-being, and preserve and build bone density and health.

Soy Isoflavones: These soy extracts are effective against hot flashes and reduce hormonal imbalances. It also reduces chances of reproductive cancers. Soy protects you from free radicals. They additionally keep cholesterol levels low, increase bone density, estrogen synthesis, and increase detoxification of harmful hormones and chemicals.

Gamma-oryzanol: It reduces secretion of the **LH hormone** by the pituitary gland and increases the release of endorphins in the blood. It is also effective at reducing cholesterol levels in your blood.

All three remedial medications are useful and help you during menopause. Effectiveness of these medicines differs from individual to individual.

Although there is no accurate medical support to prove relevancy and utility of herbal and natural remedies, they can reduce menopausal symptoms significantly and are a safe option for women who need them. Further, you can accelerate the benefits of such natural remedies by adhering to a disciplined life - regular exercise, timely and nutritious meals, and a strong optimistic attitude towards life.

All women on the higher side of fifty years old, need to be aware of their body changes and accept them naturally. You can then combat serious menopausal symptoms effectively.

15. Migraine

Migraine causes acute and unbearable headaches at recurring intervals. There are various remedial measures available like acupuncture, chiropractic manipulation and electrical nerve stimulation. However, recent findings show that natural remedies and supplements are effective ways of combating migraine attacks.

Natural Remedies for Migraine

Magnesium and Calcium: You need appropriate quantities of essential minerals like magnesium and calcium in your body. Calcium helps with muscle contractions while magnesium helps with muscular relaxation. Such muscular relaxation lowers muscle cell excitability thereby reducing migraine symptoms. Magnesium in proper combination with phosphorous, sodium, potassium and other minerals control nerve activities.

Calcium cannot be absorbed properly without magnesium. You need ½ the amount of magnesium as calcium. (500 mgs of calcium requires 250mg of magnesium).

The calming effect of magnesium reduces severity and frequency of migraine attacks in acute cases. You can take magnesium in prescribed dosages. Intravenous administration of magnesium provides almost instantaneous relief, within 15 minutes.

5-Hydroxytryptophan: Low **serotonin** levels in blood vessels cause migraine. You can increase your serotonin levels by taking 5-hydroxytryptophan supplements. Although 5-hydroxytryptophan supplements

can cure childhood migraine, it has a few side effects like muscle pain, drowsiness, gastrointestinal upset, and anxiety.

Avoid using it with other anti-depressants as it could be fatal.

Essential Oil Supplements: Essential oil supplements like **omega-3 fats**, essential oils rich in **gamma-linolenic acid**, etc. reduce migraine symptoms extensively. These essential oils convert into anti-inflammatory prostaglandin hormones in your body to improve platelet function and blood circulation.

Riboflavin: Riboflavin contains vitamin B and high doses of riboflavin reduce migraine. Riboflavin increases energy production, which acts against migraine.

Feverfew: Feverfew herb is very effective against migraine as it suppresses the production of inflammatory prostaglandin hormones. However, Feverfew produces results over a long period and you cannot get instant relief from your migraine attacks.

You can use various other therapies like soft tissue work, chiropractic adjustments, acupuncture, electrical nerve stimulation, etc. to cure your migraine. Additionally, such nutritive supplements control your migraine a great deal and show positive results over a period of time. These do not produce instant relief and you need to take specific painkillers to get relief during a migraine attack. However, such nutritional supplements taken daily will show marked reduction in frequency of migraine attacks. You can be free of migraines within a considerable period of time.

16. Muscle Pain

Muscle pain occurs due to inflammation in adjoining areas of particular muscles. Accordingly, pain receptors at the region send relevant signals to the brain. Muscle pain makes you feel stressed and tired. Some people can bear excruciating pain easily while some cannot bear even minor pains. Hence, you try to find relief through painkillers and other medicines.

It is best to opt for natural pain remedies to increase your tolerance power and your overall well-being. Low impact muscular exercises like water aerobics, tai chi, simple yoga, etc. stretch your muscles. They do not put any pressure on your skeletal system or joints. These exercises offer the best massage to all different muscles of your body, especially those of your back. Exercises rejuvenate your mind and you feel fresh, relaxed, and calm.

While exercising, your body creates and releases endorphins. These endorphins fight all negativity from your system. As a result, you are free of the ill effects of such negativity. Exercise is amazing. You feel active and roaring to start.

Similarly, meditation is another simple way of building up your inner strength and tolerance. Meditation with yoga creates soothing and tranquilizing effects on your body. You are then able to withstand all extremities of muscle pain and associated stress easily. Besides, meditation also improves your memory and keeps your mind alert.

Part-III: Natural Pain Management

17. Pain Management

Pain management is a broad term referring to different techniques to understand and rate your pain and provide relief accordingly. Pain arises due to injury to any body part or due to any illness, which weakens your body tolerance levels. Your perception of pain passes to your brain through a network of parasympathetic and sympathetic nerves within your body. These nerves provide all the necessary indications of your pain to the brain like location, cause and extent of pain. Accordingly, the brain reacts to fight back the pain and bring you relief.

As soon as brain perceives pain, it releases endorphins to fight away pain. However, if your pain is persistent, blood releases certain hormones like prostaglandins, which cause inflammation and increased pain.

Acute or chronic pain

The pain could be **acute** or **chronic**. **Acute pain** occurs due to injury or minor ailments. These disappear when you treat the condition. **Chronic pain** seems to linger on even after completion of the healing processes. Such pain is common in terminal and degenerative diseases. Such pain causes various changes in the spinal cord.

Pain management deals with effective eradication of pain from its root cause through pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies and, if need be, surgery. Pharmacological options are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen, aspirin, etc. Severe pain necessitates stronger drugs,

sometimes through injections. After achieving relief from pain, you need to stop your dosages. Non-pharmacological options refer to yoga, acupuncture, and other therapies to cure your pain.

18. Treatment Options for Pain

There are various ways to treat pain like nutritional and herbal therapies, acupressure and acupuncture, homeopathy, relaxation techniques (yoga, meditation, and hypnosis), chiropractic, massage, etc. You can also prevent certain pain such as pain due to illness, surgery, etc.

Nutritional and Herbal therapies

Healthy food with sufficient nutritional supplements can control pain like a diet rich in fiber and complex carbohydrates. Avoid allergic foods and fatty foods. Instead, concentrate of foods rich in bromelain, calcium, and magnesium, foods rich in vitamin C, foods rich in glucosamine and bioflavonoids, etc. Glucosamine reduces arthritic pain and improves joint movements extensively. Besides, these vitamins also help in healing and regenerating connective tissues.

Herbal remedies help in curing the nervous system and lessen your pain. Different herbs like Bromelain, Pine-bark and grape-seed extracts, and Curcumin reduce inflammation, Capsaicin reduces arthritic pain, kava-kava relaxes your body, and a cup of pain relief or herbal tea is best to rejuvenate your total system.

Acupressure and Acupuncture

Acupressure aims at reducing or releasing muscular tension from certain points in your head, neck,



back and shoulders by using pressure of your thumbs and fingers. Such pressure accelerates the release of endorphins, thus easing the pain.

Acupuncture is insertion of needles at various points on your body to release endorphins and lower pain. You need to have around a dozen sessions to notice reduction in pain however.

Homeopathy

Homeopathic treatments involve medications like Arnica for severe pain due to injury, Ledum for severe wounds and cuts, and Hypericum for pains in toes, nerves, fingers, etc., due to surgery.

Relaxation Techniques

Regular practice of relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation, hypnotherapy, and biofeedback helps reduce muscular tension and associated pain.

Chiropractic

This treatment cures your pains by manipulating the joints and spine. Back pain and neck pain is often due to malalignment of your spine. Chiropractic treatment works wonders for patients with persistent pain in their neck and back.

Massage

Physically manipulating your muscles and nerves by massage provides good relief from stress and pain.

There are few more treatment options like hydrotherapy using cold and warm water to cure pain and allopathic medicines, and drugs to provide relief from pain, etc.

19. Alternative Approaches to Pain Relief

There are various alternative approaches to reduce and manage your pain.

You can get help from your health adviser to guide you to choose the perfect treatment for reducing or eradicating your pain. Pain is a messenger of your discomfort in any particular region to your brain. The brain then takes the necessary action to kill the pain. You can at times cut this process by taking painkillers and antidepressants to secure temporary relief from pain.

Your pain could range from being acute to chronic. Chronic pain sufferers often encounter extensive despair while trying to fight pain. Hence, it produces extensive psychological pressure, frustration, and depression. Besides, chronic pain lingers on for a considerable period and you sometimes accept such pain as a part of your existence.

You can adopt traditional Chinese methods of acupuncture to cure your chronic ailments and get relief from pain. Acupuncture involves inserting needles at strategic points in your body for few minutes to around half an hour depending on your pain. These needles supposedly release blocked chi at these points, which are the root cause for your pain. You find immense relief from jaw pain, sinus pain, backache, spinal disorders, knee pain and other types of pain.

Specific herbs provide relief from specific pain like chamomile for nerve pain, passionflower for back pain, feverfew for migraine, ginger, and sea cucumber for joint pain, etc. Meditation-mindful, concentrative, or transcendental-calms your mind, frees it of all negative thoughts, and reduces stress and pain.

Aromatherapy is another alternative approach to cure your pain. You apply or sniff certain essential oils. These release neuro-transmitters endorphins and cure your pain. Specific aromas include rose, lavender, peppermint, thyme, jasmine, geranium, etc. Guided imagery technique helps you visualize scenes of your pain to release certain chemicals in the brain like serotonin, etc. These decrease your anxiety levels and increase the effectiveness of your immune system.

Biofeedback is an advanced alternative technique to reduce your pain. After many treatments, you are able to regulate your blood pressure, heart rate, etc, which are otherwise involuntary actions.

20. Natural Alternatives to NSAIDs

NSAID refers to **Non-steroidal inflammatory drugs**. Most NSAIDs provide temporary relief from pain and you often seem to be suffering from your joint aches and pain intermittently. Besides, NSAIDs weaken your total body system due to their strong dosages.

There are various natural alternatives to NSAIDs.

- **Willow bark** containing tannins, glycosides, flavonoids, etc., and provide the perfect cure for osteoarthritis.
- **Devil's claw** provides relief from arthritis and cures burns and sores. It improves joint mobility and reduces pain.
- **Phytodolor** in regular doses is more effective than most NSAIDs.
- **PSAMe** is effective in controlling all types of pain.

Other natural alternatives include **turmeric**, **ginger** and certain fatty acids to reduce your pain.

21. Fifty Natural Ways to Ease Your Pain

Pain in any body part starts and spreads gradually and your body sends regular signals to you about your discomfort. Fifty natural ways to ease your pain is:

- 1. Deep breathing:** Deep breathing eases your respiratory system and your natural breathing rhythm help you with pain.
- 2. Guided imagery:** Guided imagery makes you think of positive factors and visualize positive images in pleasant and serene surroundings. This diverts your attention from pain and sends messages to your brain that all is well.
- 3. Massage:** Massage reduces muscular tension and increases blood circulation resulting in better supply of nutrients to tissues.
- 4. Waste materials:** Remove metabolic waste through exercises and massage to heal body tissues.
- 5. Hypnosis:** Hypnosis changes focus to other factors besides pain. You then view pain positively and do not suffer agony due to pain.
- 6. Acupuncture:** Thin needles at strategic points on the body releases body pressure and pain.
- 7. Special food:** Avoid red meat; include fish and chicken to maintain well-lubricated joints.
- 8. Biofeedback:** Monitor your anxiety levels and release tension and pain.

- 9. Posture work:** Maintain perfect posture to find relief from most muscular pains.
- 10. Manage your system:** Maintain your nervous system in excellent condition to be able to manage chronic pain.
- 11. Physical therapy:** Through this therapy, you stretch muscles to strengthen them.
- 12. Hydrotherapy:** These light water exercises refresh your muscles thereby reducing pain.
- 13. Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (T.E.N.S.):** A small battery-operated device on your skin sends signals to control your pain.
- 14. Specific Treatment:** Treat cause of acute pain to get relief from pain.
- 15. Healthy diet:** Include plenty of vegetables, fruits, and water in your diet to keep joints healthy and free of pain.
- 16. Go Herbal:** Use different herbs like curcumin, ginger, and licorice to maintain healthy joints.
- 17. Treat Nausea:** Nausea causes abdominal pain and eating ginger or chamomile reduces it.
- 18. Topical creams:** Creams containing natural oils are effective for external application over pain areas.
- 19. Weight Control:** Maintain your proper body weight to avoid pain in knees and back.

- 20. Vitamins and minerals:** Mineral and vitamin supplements of Vitamin C, magnesium, zinc, etc relieve arthritis pain.
- 21. Exercises:** Regular exercise keeps joints and all muscles in excellent shape, thereby negating pain.
- 22. Light Medicines:** Light and simpler medicines like acetaminophen provide relief from pain.
- 23. Therapeutic fast:** Such a fast detoxifies your body and releases all waste materials to free you of any pain.
- 24. Depression:** Be happy and let go of depressing thoughts to be free of pain.
- 25. Music:** Soothing music releases mental tension and resultant pain.
- 26. Avoid self- diagnosis:** Get the help of a registered practitioner to diagnose the cause and suggest suitable remedies.
- 27. Think Positively:** Positive thoughts reduce pain.
- 28. Recognize early symptoms:** Analyze body pain early to reduce its intensity.
- 29. Acupressure:** Apply sufficient pressure through fingers and hands at specific points to release pain.
- 30. Body movements:** Maintain regular body movements through walking and jogging to reduce pain.
- 31. Sleep:** Have a good night’s sleep to ease your pain.

- 32. Regular Meals:** Develop regular and timely eating habits to ease pain.
- 33. Maintain a ‘pain diary’:** Maintain details of your pain in a diary to decipher the cause of pain and treat it. Include your eating and activity in that diary, too.
- 34. Maintain health:** Maintain a healthy body and outlook to ease pain.
- 35. Early beginning:** Practice a healthy lifestyle to ease pain.
- 36. Appetite:** Develop a good appetite and eat well to keep the body healthy and pain-free. Get rid of junk food. Junk food is a filler that replaces the healthy food that you should be eating.
- 37. Treatment:** Treat the source of pain to ease it.
- 38. Release pain:** Try to release pain through different processes and therapies. Do not suppress your pain.
- 39. Decipher pain techniques:** Understand pain techniques and adopt suitable measures.
- 40. Allopathic:** Use them to curb severe pain.
- 41. Chiropractic adjustments:** These develop better and easier ways to combat pain.
- 42. Yoga:** Different yoga postures release physical pain and mental stress.
- 43. Temporary relief:** Use gentle painkillers to get temporary relief.
- 44. Avoid NSAIDs:** Avoid them to be free of their side effects.

- 45. Meditation:** Meditate to ease pain.
- 46. Avoid multi-treatment:** Stick to a single treatment option to ease your pain. When you try new herbs, give them a chance to work so that you can save money by not taking a ton of remedies and not really know which ones are truly helping.
- 47. Be Happy:** Happy thoughts ease your pain. Find things to laugh about. It's hard sometimes, but laughing relieves stress. Stress relieves your pain.
- 48. Systematic approach:** A systematic approach will lower tension and pain.
- 49. “Acid Rich” foods:** Eat foods rich in amino acids and omega-3 acids to ease pain.
- 50. Body System Maintenance:** Maintain your immune system to ease pain.

22. Best Natural, Herbal and Nutritional Pain Therapies

Natural therapies use different herbs and nutritive supplements to ease your pain. These therapies aim at attacking the source of pain gradually. Most therapies show substantial effects over time and you cannot expect instant cures or remedy for your pain through natural, herbal, or nutritional therapies. The best way to reap the maximum benefit of pain therapies is a combination of pain relieving herbs like **Willow Bark**, **Tart cherry** and **Boswellia** through **Integrative Therapeutics**.

Willow Bark is the original source of the-widely accepted painkiller, aspirin. Although aspirin poses various side effects, Willow Bark is a safe and effective medicine for relief from pain. It effectively reduces pain without producing any adverse effects like gastric bleeding or ulcers. A daily dose of Willow Bark extract produces significant reduction in hip, knee pain, and osteoarthritis. You can reduce dosage after four to six weeks depending on your degree of pain. You cannot use Willow Bark if you are allergic to aspirin.

Boswellia is an **Ayurvedic** medicine of repute and offers a good cure for pain and inflammation. It is very effective in rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Boswellia can block inflammatory chemicals from entering your bloodstream, thereby reducing and treating inflammation. Besides, Boswellia exhibits extensive healing properties and can treat ulcers, colitis, asthma, and cancer to a certain extent. It hardly has any side effects.

Cherry Fruit contains some compounds with COX-1 elements. These elements have various anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. These are

effective against pain and prevent colon cancers and many other ailments. Around ten to twenty cherries a day can provide sufficient antioxidants to combat all pain.

Your body needs enough nutrition to build a healthy support system. This, by itself, prevents occurrence of any pain. Different vitamin and mineral supplements like Sulfur amino acids, Glucosamine, and Chondroitin offer better resistance to pain and infections. A nutritious diet with sufficient rest and sleep can build a good immune system. It is therefore best to adopt such herbal, natural, and nutritional therapies to combat pain.

23. Twelve Steps to Managing Your Pain

1. Learn and maintain correct posture for sitting, with sufficient lumbar support.
2. Adopt proper movement techniques for bending, walking, playing, etc.
3. Exercise for around half an hour daily with proper instructional help.
4. Consult an orthopedist to find out if you have any predisposition for musculoskeletal injuries or strains.
5. Take one-minute breaks in between long stretches of sitting at desks, while watching television, or working on a computer.
6. Eat a balanced low sugar and low fat diet with sufficient amounts of vitamins C, E, and selenium.
7. Stretch your muscles often to release pressure.
8. Use anti-anxiety exercises like repeating words or prayer to relax your body.
9. Take analgesics with food to lessen any gastrointestinal problems.
10. Meditation produces soothing effects on your nerves and increases healing powers.
11. Allow muscles to relax and do not make them tense.
12. Aroma of rosemary, lavender, or chamomile reduces pain.

24. Exercises to Relieve Back Pain

Back pain is very common. You are not alone! It mainly occurs if you push, bend, pull, lift, twist, or strain wrongly. A sudden awkward turn can also cause back pain. Although it is a piercing pain at first, later it settles as a chronic pain. Sedentary lifestyle is a major cause for back pain.

Start with easy warming & stretching exercises before the back pain exercises.

Simple exercises which you can do daily to help relieve your back pain are:

- 1.** Lie on your hands and knees. Raise right arm and left leg simultaneously, parallel to ground. Stay for two seconds and repeat with left arm and right leg about ten times.
- 2.** Lie facedown and extend your arms with outstretched palms on the floor. Raise right arm and left leg simultaneously as high as possible. Hold for ten seconds and repeat the other side. Alternate ten times initially and then increase to twenty times.
- 3.** Lie flat on your back, bring knees, and chin to your chest simultaneously. Hold for fifteen seconds and repeat twice.
- 4.** Place your feet tightly under your couch, lying facedown with arms at sides. Raise chest as high as possible and hold for two seconds. Repeat.
- 5.** Stand with feet a little bit apart, knees bent slightly. Place palms of hands at lower back near your waist. Lean back as much as possible and hold for ten seconds. Repeat.

25. Natural Anti-inflammatory Supplements

Natural anti-inflammatory supplements can effectively reduce degeneration of body tissues and prevent cartilage destruction. Such supplements reduce signs of arthritis and other joint pains.

Turmeric is an active anti-inflammatory supplement containing curcumin. This agent is effective in inhibiting activities of different enzymes, thereby reducing swelling, inflammation, and associated pain.

Boswellia has the capacity to restrict specific enzymes in white blood cells.

White Willow Bark Extract also reduces back pain, arthritis, and various other inflammatory conditions.

Ginger Root Extract is effective in osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and myalgias.

Quercetin restricts release of anti-inflammatory enzymes and is useful for arthritis patients.

Devil's Claw is also an effective anti-inflammatory agent.

26. Can Music Be Effective in Pain Relief?

Music has a soothing effect universally. Music produces melodious and harmonious effects on the human brain. Music can be of any type that you enjoy. It can be slow melodies, sad songs, rap songs, fast music, etc. It depends on your individual taste and accordingly you will listen to sad, harmonious, or rhythmic music which is soothing, which will provide you relief from pain.

You can thereafter adopt your choice of music to find adequate relief from pain. The right melody lowers your breathing and heart rate considerably. You relax and are able to fight away all types of pain. This is a simple and cheap pain management therapy. Besides, you can listen to your music within the comforts of your home and keep your mind and body relaxed.

27. How to Lessen Your Pain in Just Six Weeks

Steve Jordan, performance-enhancement specialist provides a simple program to improve your posture and relieve your pain in just six weeks.

His program consists of three different workouts, each of which is for aligning specific parts of your body. Each workout has further specific techniques for massage, strength, and stretching. The program consists of:

Pronation Distortion Syndrome: This condition displays tight inner thighs, calves, hamstrings, and is the cause behind most ankle injuries and low back pain. To get relief, place right calf on roller and roll tightly until you can locate the pain spot. Switch legs and do similarly. Increase the strength of your muscles by doing regulated strengthening exercises. Try to lengthen your muscles in the groin region by keeping your hips square and rotating your trunk.

Lower Crossed Syndrome: This is common among disk jockeys and causes slipped disks and damages nerves. Apply pressure on foam roller with thighs and roll to the knees to locate the sensitive spot. Relax each such area. Strengthen your nerves by positioning yourself on your knees and hands but keep neck and hips in a neutral position. Stretch your legs and lean forward to stretch further.

Upper crossed Syndrome: This causes most neck pain, headaches, and shoulder pain. Locate your sensitive points by lying on your stomach and applying pressure to your upper body with your weight. Squeeze shoulder blades together to make them stronger. Try to expand shoulder and chest muscles to develop better upper body posture.

Part-IV: Natural Pain Therapies

28. Three Mind-body Techniques to Cope with Chronic Pain

Chronic pain is one of the most common complaints that medical practitioners deal with. Over 86 million Americans suffer from this expensive malaise. Chronic pain has been defined as a persistent hurting sensation that lasts for six or more months. Headaches, backaches, arthritis and residual sports- or car-accident injuries are the most common forms of chronic pain.

The worst part is that the pain threshold is different for different people, so there is no common treatment to eliminate pain. But, not all the news is painful. Some affordable and effective methods can help alleviate your pain. Do not discontinue your pain medication yet, but ask your doctor if any of these methods might help you control your pain and better your lifestyle:

The simplest of the lot is *self-hypnosis*, which guides your conscious mind away from your pain. A recent *Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center/Harvard Medical School* study of patients who had undergone surgery, found that those who used self-hypnosis recovered faster and needed less pain medication.

Mindfulness meditation is the exact opposite of self-hypnosis. It makes you focus on your pain, understand, and accept it. This helps you manage it from that point of focus.

You can also try the age-old method of *yoga*, the practice of which boosts production of endorphins – neurotransmitters that suppress pain sensations.

29. Acupuncture Treatment

Imagine piercing your body with needles to relieve yourself of pain! You will not find it so ridiculous once you have tried out acupuncture. Acupuncture is an age-old treatment for pain relief and other problems. Acupuncture was developed in China. Acupuncture involves inserting very thin needles through the energy or trigger points of the body to restore the good health and harmony of the body.

In the past few years, the practice of acupuncture has gained wide acceptability. It is widely used to treat chronic pain. The National Institutes of Health officially acknowledged acupuncture as a successful treatment for pain and nausea in 1997. The World Health Organization lists more than forty health conditions including headaches, tennis elbow, menstrual cramps, carpal tunnel syndrome and osteoarthritis for which acupuncture treatment is effective.

Practitioners believe the action of piercing the body with a needle makes the body release its natural painkillers – endorphins and opioids. Research shows that an acupuncture treatment leaves you with elevated levels of glucose and other bloodstream chemicals and enhances the body's electromagnetic flow.

Acupuncture is not just a simple method of sticking pins into your body. While that is a simple method, other methods involve heated needles or twirled needles. Sometimes two or more needles may be inserted into the same trigger point!

Most people may feel queasy at the idea of piercing their bodies. They need not fear. Acupuncture is a scientific method, which uses tried and tested

methods on you. The needles, which are solid and sterile, are just a little wider than a human hair. Your body will immediately be suffused with warmth and good feeling. Some patients have even been known to sleep through their treatments.

However, there is one thing you need to be sure about:

You must make sure that your acupuncture practitioner is certified by an official acupuncture organization like the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture, National Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance, and The American Association of Oriental Medicine. Alternately, you could opt for a practicing member of the American Academy of Medical Acupuncture.

30. Affirmations for Pain Control

Here is a pain relief treatment that asks you to accept your condition and acknowledge that you are in pain. Over time, it actually helps reduce the pain in your body. This treatment is known as *Affirmation* and YOU are the practitioner! Sounds unbelievable? Read on.

Dr Emile Couè first practiced affirmation in the 19th century, and cured thousands of patients using a simple phrase: *"Every day in every way I am getting better and better"*. Practitioners of Affirmation state that this method helps you reprogram your subconscious mind to change its perception of pain. Therefore, if you are a chronic pain patient, all you have to do is program yourself for positive affirmations. When you keep telling yourself that you are getting better every day, your mind will begin to believe this statement.

Moreover, this phenomenon can be explained scientifically. The human brain is only capable of processing stimuli. It does not know the difference between the real and perceptual world. So in effect, you are playing a little game on your brain when you make it believe what you want it to. Moreover, this is where affirmations come into play. All you have to do is choose a phrase and repeat it throughout the day, every day. You will be surprised to know that after some time, you will begin to feel a reduction in the intensity of the pain.

So how do you go about alleviating chronic pain? First, you have to determine your goals. Be realistic. If you are arthritic, you may not be able to sprint across the tracks one fine morning. But, you certainly can affirm yourself pain free. You need to have believable goals – goals that you know are within your reach. The next step is very important. You have to phrase or word your affirmation. You should write it down and work on it until it sounds good and

positive, and is something you will like repeating to yourself as often as possible.

Then there is PRAYER.... whether you believe in God or a higher power or not, prayer works. Every civilization discovered by mankind has found some kind of prayer taking place. Be it an idol, deity or some kind of symbol. Prayer is important to mankind. I will not tell you who or what to pray to, but I will tell you to pray. Pray and be thankful for the little things in life and ask for help in the areas of your life that you need help in. If it is stress, or back pain, or family problems, just ask.

31. Biofeedback

Stress is a number one killer in the world today. Most people seem to have forgotten how to relax and are in a constant state of arousal. This makes one or more functions of your body permanently overactive leading to bodily damage. Nowadays, medical practitioners use a scientific treatment technique called biofeedback to help reduce and reverse the effects of such stress. Biofeedback is a method of treatment in which therapists train you to use your body signals to improve your health.

Biofeedback was first used in the 1960s to train experimental research subjects to alter supposedly involuntary functions like brain activity, blood pressure, heart rate, and other bodily functions. Today biofeedback has grown out of the laboratory and has become one of the popular means of control of different kinds of pain including migraine headaches, and many other types of pain, high blood pressure, digestive disorders, epilepsy, and paralysis. Therapists even use biofeedback to help stroke victims regain movement in paralyzed muscles.

Today, most medical practitioners including psychiatrists, dentists, nurses and physical therapists use this technique to help their patients control pain. They teach their patients to use different relaxation methods to calm down and identify their pain triggers.

So how exactly does it work? Clinicians use biofeedback machines that monitor your internal bodily functions. The machines give feedback on physical responses such as skin temperature and muscle tension and helps patients recognize and actively work towards a relaxed state. In this technique, the patient plays an active role in his/her treatment. The machine helps you

gauge the progress of your treatment and helps you direct its course along with your therapist.

However, do not rush into biofeedback hoping for some magical cure. It is only one of the tools which physicians use to cure a patient. It also requires a high degree of commitment from you. As a practitioner, you will have to reexamine and restructure your life to help ease your pains and stress-related problems. In addition, since you are an active participant in your treatment, you should be equally responsible for maintaining your good health.

32. Creative Visualization to Reduce Pain

This is a pain reduction method, which one cannot describe in a couple of words. It requires you to let go of all that is real, and sane and venture into a world that YOU create, and may sound crazy... something similar to *Alice in Wonderland*. Are you ready to embark on the trip that definitely does not appeal to your reason but to that wild child in you, which is ready to venture out into uncharted territory?

Anybody who has had his limbs amputated can tell you of their frustration and anger at the pain they suffer in the limbs that are not there at all. This phantom pain can be quite excruciating and real. *Dr. V.S. Ramachandran*, director of Neuroscience at the *University of San Diego, California*, devised a simple and effective way to cure the pain.

He placed mirrors in such a way that they reflected the other, whole arm or leg. Therefore, when the patient sees this, though he knows that his limb has been amputated, his eyes see a whole, and healthy limb. This message reaches the brain, and well, the pain stops immediately.

So how can you use this method? First get yourself some free time; you only require 10 to 15 minutes. Breathe deeply and let your body relax. Take your time doing this and do not hurry into the next step until you are very relaxed. Now visualize yourself, as you would like to be – what is the state you would be happiest? Then visualize your pain. Give it a physical form; for instance, if it is a migraine then imagine it as a tight band around your head. Then, concentrate on it and try to loosen it slowly.

It is not a miracle cure. So do not imagine you taking off the band and walking off into the sunset, free of pain. Be realistic and true and see the results trickling in slowly. It is a simple method and the only thing required of you is discipline.

33. How Exercise Helps Relieve Pain

For some people, chronic pain is a way of life. They have no escape from it and are forced to bear the pain day in and day out. If you are suffering from such pain, you have probably tried the different painkillers your general practitioner has suggested, but to no avail. Do not despair yet. There are a few therapies, which provide you with almost miraculous cures but also do not require you to pop any pills. One such cure is exercise, which is one of the best natural painkillers available to you.



Not only does exercise relieve pain, it also provides relief from many health problems including, sleep problems, depression, and results in increased metabolism and better health. It sounds unbelievable! Doesn't it? Who would try to do a dozen push-ups when his back is aching terribly? Well maybe not push-ups, but some form of gentle exercise is beneficial.

Here are some exercise facts: *Martin Hoffman*, M.D., professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the *Medical College of Wisconsin* and the *Veterans Affairs Medical Center* in Milwaukee, recently conducted a study of people affected with chronic pain. He found out that the people who had exercised for a minimum of 30 minutes showed signs of reduced pain density.

This happens because when you exercise, your body releases endorphins, which are natural painkillers. So, regular exercise will ensure that the endorphins are released regularly and will reduce your pain perception in the long run.

34. Exercise for Pain Control

Imagine getting a shot of morphine every time you feel the pain begin to creep in. Wouldn't it be great to have something that will help you achieve that long-forgotten feeling of painlessness... something akin to the days when you were a child? You knew no pain and could go romping about or run wild and free. Sounds lovely and guess what, the solution to this state of painlessness does lie in your past.

Most of us have spent our childhoods running, cycling, dancing, skating, or doing just about anything that we enjoyed. Moreover, at the end of the day, we just had to slump into bed, and before we knew it, we would be sleeping like logs. Did we know any pain then?

The key to painlessness lies in the activity, or activities that we enjoyed doing. Moreover, guess what, all you need to do is (on a smaller scale though) play again! This does not mean you play baseball with the kids on your block... what you REALLY need to do is exercise.

Does it sound unrealistic enough? Check out these facts:

Studies have shown that exercise gets your body into pain management mode. It releases endorphins that numb the pain in your body.

The strain of every day living makes your body tense. This can put immense pressure on your body, increasing the intensity of the pain. Exercise helps to relieve this tension.

Another benefit is that regular exercise creates a feeling of well-being and happiness in your brain, which improves your overall health.

Regular exercise improves your sleep pattern and helps you sleep better.

Then there are those innumerable health benefits that come with regular exercise.

You can perform any physical activity that you like. Just ensure that it is not too tiring. The best method is to sit down with your health practitioner and draw up a list of activities that you can safely undertake. These can include walking, stationary cycling, swimming, aqua aerobics, yoga, and Tai chi, if, your health practitioner permits, you could even perform some strength training exercises.

The important thing to remember is that you SHOULD enjoy doing whatever you do. This is not a quick fix solution to pain and may require a lifelong commitment from you. Therefore, it is best to do something that you like and can maintain.

Exercise is no magical cure all. Do not expect total painlessness as soon as you begin walking or swimming. You have to use medications and a couple of mental exercises as well. Combine all these to create a potent solution to pain, and then sit back and enjoy the wonder of painlessness.

35. Electrical Nerve Stimulation

TENS or *transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation* is essentially transmitting electrical signals to primary nerves to get relief from pain. The transmissions are relayed via the TENS device, which is a small battery-operated stimulator that creates low-intensity electrical signals transmitted via electrodes on or near a painful area. The electrical flow causes a tingling vibration that slowly fights the pain. The patient determines the signals he needs.

There are two theories as to why *TENS* is effective. Some experts opine that it obstructs pain signals in the spinal cord i.e. by relaying electrical thrusts to nerves reduces the experience of pain. Others feel that electrical stimulation activates natural painkillers in the body.

TENS treatment technique can be administered to any part of the body and is effective in curing a wide variety of pains such as neck and lower back pain, and migraines. It also cures pains related to arthritis, post-herpetic neuralgia (lingering chronic pain after an attack of shingles), sciatica (pain radiating from the lower back, through the legs, to the foot), Temporomandibular joint pain, osteoarthritis, amputation (phantom limb), fibromyalgia (a condition causing aching and stiffness throughout the body). *TENS* treatment has also been found to be effective in pains resulting due to childbirth, post-surgical pain, fractures, muscle and joint pain, sports injuries and menstrual cramps.

Although *TENS* is safe, it is recommended that patients having pacemakers consult their cardiologists before using it. Another precaution that all patients must take is to avoid electrical stimulation in the front of the neck. There is no hard evidence to prove the safety of using it during pregnancy.

The *TENS* therapy is simply to ease pain and does not cure the condition responsible for the pain. Results are dependent on the cause of the pain and the patient’s physical and mental well-being. A study recently conducted found that the results from using a TENS unit and a placebo were equal. Therefore, a lot depends on the faith quotient of the patient.

36. Journal Writing

Journal Writing or, in short, Journaling is considered therapeutic. It is also known as treatment through writing. *The Journal of the American Medical Association* has advocated the method.

You can express your feelings, thoughts, and beliefs, imagination-just about anything. Experts believe that it helps you gain a deeper insight into your feelings and strengths (maybe you were not aware they existed). It is distressing, especially when you are going through a bad phase of life. It provides an outlet for you to vent out your pain, grief and your inner fears. *Writing* down your feelings associated with pain, helps you to see things with more clarity. You can distinguish trends and patterns and throw some light on what aggravated or lessened it.

Writing thoughts and feelings helps you organize and sort through problems and emotions. There is a method to journal writing to maximize the benefits. You should remember to date each entry. Mentioning the time, place and related details is preferable. To sustain, set a time aside for this every day. This will help in tracing patterns regarding your emotional quotient. Measure your emotions (fear, pain, happiness, depression) on a scale of zero for no pain to 10.

Trace your pain patterns

Many people find that there is a specific graph. For example, some people experience less pain in the mornings and more in the evenings. Try to relate your pain to specific activities. It is essential to preview your progress chart as well. Try to be as expressive while writing. Many people may not be aware but

confessional writing has been practiced since the Renaissance, and modern research has proved that it is indeed therapeutic. University of Texas at Austin psychologist and researcher *James Pennebaker* believes that regular journaling strengthens the T-lymphocytes or the immune cells.

There is journal software available, which offers you a host of options and assures privacy. Even if you do not feel like investing in one, the pen and paper is just right.

37. Magnetic Therapy

Magnetic therapy or the use of magnets to cure many ailments and diseases is an age-old technique. Third century Greek physicians used magnetized metal to treat arthritis and to stop bleeding. By the Middle Ages, doctors found further uses like treating gout, arthritis, poisoning, and baldness; and to remove arrowheads and other iron objects from the body. In the United States, magnetic devices became popular after the Civil War. More recently, magnets are used in curing lifestyle problems like high blood pressure, stress, aches and pains, respiratory problems, circulatory problems, arthritis, rheumatism, etc.

There are two types of magnetic therapy - static or permanent and electromagnetic. The first are so called because they produce static or unchanging fields, whereas the electromagnets create magnetic fields on application of an electrical current.

The purpose of this report is to give a brief background on the effectiveness of magnetic therapy and present updated scientific facts on it.

The curability factor is not completely accepted. However, it is popular mode of treatment and people firmly believe that it does provide relief. Often, electromagnetic therapy is used a supplement to conventional medicine. For instance, it has been found that use of electromagnets speeds up the healing of bone fractures. They are even used to map areas of the brain.

There are many explanations and theories to explain magnetic therapy. An important fact however is that while many of these are interesting, none of them have been absolutely verified. It is believed that magnets affect cell functioning and maintain a balance between cell growth and decay. They help

increase the flow of blood, thereby increasing the flow of oxygen and nutrients. Electromagnetic pulses can affect the brain's perception of pain. They also help in production of white blood cells, essential for fighting infection and inflammation.

It is also believed that consumption of "Magnetizing" or "re-magnetizing" drinking water and other beverages helps to hydrate the body and hence flush out toxins.

If one does go in for magneto therapy, certain precautions must be taken. Magnets may affect functioning of pacemakers, defibrillators, and insulin pumps. In addition, pregnant women are advised to be cautious, as the effect of a magnet on a fetus is not known. Magnetic therapy is a popular form of natural therapy, yet it is advised that readers consult a health practitioner before undergoing this form of therapy.

38. Massage Therapy

M*assage Therapy* is an ancient Chinese and Indian therapy. Greek and Roman physicians brought massage to the West.

Chronic pain causes a vicious cycle. As a biological reaction, muscles tend to contract around the pain area to protect it. If the pain persists over a period of time, muscles can become tight. The tight muscles bear down on nerves, causing tingling, numbness, or more pain. *Massage therapy* helps by loosening tight muscles and stimulates the nervous system.

Tight muscles also reduce circulation, thereby allowing waste products to amass. Waste products and toxins, and shortened muscles make the simplest of actions difficult. You tend to decrease movements and exercises because of the resultant pain. This leads to poor circulation and leads to more muscle degradation. Massage therapy de-tightens the muscles, expands blood vessels and increases circulation. The *massaging* movements of kneading and stretching the muscles soften and lengthen connective tissues.

Specialized *massage* for chronic pains releases trigger points, flushes out the toxins, and stretches muscles, thereby restoring movement and flexibility. It is a great stress and fatigue buster also and you find yourself refreshed and renewed after a good massage.

Nowadays, *massage* has gathered a seedy reputation due to the mushrooming erotic or sexual *massage* parlors. The truth is that far from it. Professional *Massage Therapists* are experts in anatomy, physiology and circulatory methods, oxygen intake, nutrient absorption and elimination of metabolic wastes. They perform appropriate massage after a thorough examination of the

patient’s medical history. The therapist performs treatments intended to stretch and loosen specific connective tissues, diminish pain and improve structural alignment. A *Massage therapist* not only performs skilled manual massaging but also uses it in combination with ultrasound, electrical, heat, and cold treatment options.

Research has established that *Massage Therapy* enhances the immune system and release endorphins (natural painkillers). It is a natural combatant to life style related diseases depression, anxiety and tension and other stress related diseases. These all seem to melt away in the hands of a professional *massage therapist*.

39. Meditation for Relaxation and Pain Relief

Imagine having a single cure for all these ailments: Insomnia, backache, hyperventilation, headache, high blood pressure, and anxiety. You would definitely be ready to pay the earth to get cures to such problems, and yet the best cure is free for anybody who wishes to try it out! All you have to do is meditate, or in other words, take a break from real life.

Meditation is one of the oldest and best healing and stress relieving methods available to us. You can meditate in various ways – prayer, hypnosis and other new age methods. All these methods lead to the same solution – they help you get a sense of relaxation to your mind, body, and spirit.

When you meditate, you are spending time with yourself, clearing out all the clutter in your brain and helping it relax. By thanks, your body and mind confer upon you a range of health benefits that no medicine can give. The best part is that it is absolutely free and available to everyone.

Research shows that there is an increase in the immune function of a person who meditates. The heart rate and stress levels fall and cholesterol levels are lowered.

Anybody can meditate. All you need is the willpower and the wish to better your life. You can begin with a 20-minute schedule where you switch off your phones, shut the door on everyone else and sit down comfortably. Close your eyes and think of that one thing that you believe in most or is dearest to you. Now begin repeating the name of this person or thing or phrase. For example, if you are spiritual, you could repeat your favorite prayer. Remember to keep it

simple or you can be distracted. If you find it difficult to concentrate, then try the numerous CDs and tapes that help you meditate.

Other equally good meditation methods include listening to soft music, and concentrating on a particular object. You can try any method that suits you and helps you achieve the desired results.

40. Relaxation Therapy

You might wonder how relaxing can help in the cure of diseases. Then, do you know what REAL relaxation is? Most of us forgot the art of relaxing once we were out of our cradles.

Most people still do not believe in the healing powers of simple relaxation. Research shows that the practice of relaxation techniques can benefit your health immensely.

So what exactly is relaxation? You will be surprised to know that prayer is a good form of relaxation. So if you are spiritually inclined, this will work wonders for you. You can also try hypnosis as an alternative. Hypnosis allows you to access your subconscious mind with the help of a hypnotist.

If you are not enthused by either of these two methods, then there are routes that are more scientific. Two of the more popular ones are the *Jacobson Progressive Muscle Relaxation* (PMR), and the *Autogenic Relaxation* techniques.

In the 1930s, Dr. Eric Jacobsen developed PMR to help his patients relax. The PMR method teaches practitioners to relax by releasing muscle tension. In PMR, you have to first contract and then release each muscle group. This helps you recognize the difference between a relaxed and tense state.

This method makes you concentrate on each body part, tighten the muscles in that part and hold it for as long as you can. Then you should slowly relax the muscles and let that part go limp. If you perform this exercise every night before you go to bed, you will be notice that you get a good night's sleep.

In autogenic relaxation too, you have to concentrate on the body parts but this time you do not need to tense your body. Just keep repeating to yourself that you are in a state of relaxation.

Repeat the phrases three or four times and note the way your body begins to obey you. The trick here is to not rush yourself; let your body determine its own pace for relaxation.

41. Tai Chi for Pain Relief and Calm

Is your back pain, arthritis or age preventing you from getting your daily dose of exercise? Try Tai Chi – an exercise that gives you a range of additional health benefits. This is a form of exercise, which the ancient Chinese developed and perfected over the centuries. Practicing Tai Chi or QiGong movements calms you and helps you deal with stress, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, sleep problems, and many other physical, emotional, or mental challenges.

Over the past few years, researchers have verified the authenticity of these benefits that Tai Chi practitioners claim they enjoy. The gentle movements are perfect for people with limited mobility. It helps you strengthen your muscles and gives you increased flexibility - particularly in the spine. Medical research shows that practice of Tai Chi may help you slow the aging process!

In the July 1997 issue of *The Harvard Health Letter*, a review stated that regular practice of Tai Chi reduces the risk of falling in older folks, and improves balance. A study in Australia found that Tai Chi provides a practitioner with the same benefits of a brisk walk. Other publications verifying the benefits of Tai Chi include a *John Hopkins* publication, a study by the *University of California*, and a *Consumer Report* published in 2000.

42. Yoga for Back Pain Relief

Yoga is a well-recognized method of reducing body tension and relieving stress. It is one of the most popular relaxation techniques today. Research shows that yoga is one of the most effective cures for a bad backache.

All the benefits notwithstanding, you still have to be careful before you begin the practice of yoga. Not all poses relieve pain; some of them may even aggravate your condition. It is important that you perform your exercises under supervision of a certified yoga instructor. A good instructor can help you form and improve your poses and leave the pain behind.

A few simple yoga poses will help you relieve back pain. What are the prerequisites to a yoga session? You should have a good mat or soft supportive surface and know when to stop. Hold each pose for five to ten seconds, and stop as soon as you begin to feel any discomfort.

The *corpse* is the simplest where you have to only lie flat on your back and relax. Allow the tension to leave your body by breathing in and out slowly. The *cat stretch* is another good method where you have to be on your hands and knees. Hold a flat back and hold your head down loosely. Now as you inhale, you should arch your back upward and tuck your chin inward. Hold this position for a while and then release.

In the *wind releasing pose*, you should lie assume the corpse position and then as you inhale, use your hands to draw one leg toward your chest while your other leg remains flat. Bring your forehead to touch your knee as you exhale. Release and repeat with the other leg.

In the *fish pose*, you should lie on your back, and bend your knees. Arch your back, and use your elbows to raise your back off the floor.

Other exercises include *locust*, *sage twist*, and *palm tree*. These poses can be a bit strenuous, so you need to take care when performing them.

Part-V: Prevention of Injuries and Pain

43. Safe Exercises during Pregnancy to Help Minimize Back Pain

Simple exercises during pregnancy ensure easy delivery with less labor.

Besides, exercises help maintain overall health and lower stress levels. Most exercises aim at minimizing back pain. You only need to make minor changes in your regular exercise schedules by lessening total time and exertion levels. If you intend starting exercises during pregnancy, try easier ones leisurely. However, if you have any medical complications, take the advice of your medical adviser for suitable exercises during pregnancy.

Different exercises for pregnant women include:

- Cycling on a stationary bike to maintain body balance
- Walking exercises all body muscles for better coordination during labor
- Swimming without jumping or diving
- Kegel exercises to strengthen your pelvic muscles, which help in a smoother delivery. Besides, you also do not develop any urinary problems after delivery. You only need to tighten your pelvic muscles for around five to ten seconds and then relax them. You can do these exercises as many times as you can in a single day.
- Pelvic exercises like tilting, rocking, etc. help tighten abdominal muscles, which work with pelvic muscles during childbirth.

- Tailored exercises tone your back muscles and help maintain a straight back. You sit on floor, cross ankles, and bring your feet close to your body comfortably. In same position, you can place and press your hands underneath your knees without much exertion. Alternatively, stretch your legs in front of feet and try to reach your feet with your hands as much as possible.

A few precautions for exercising during pregnancy include -

- Weight training during pregnancy should be only for abdominal muscles and upper body parts. Do not lift weights beyond your head or strain any back muscles. You should not start weight training if you were not weight training before pregnancy.
- Experts say, that if you were doing an exercise before pregnancy, chances are your body is used to it.
- Avoid exercising lying on your back after the 4th month of pregnancy.
- Never exhaust yourself by exercising.
- Do warming and cooling exercises for around five minutes before starting and ending your exercise schedule respectively.
- Stop all exercises if you have any bleeding, irregular heartbeat, pelvic pain, or any other feeling of discomfort.
- Do not do any exercises involving rough and erratic movements.

44. Healing Yourself - How to Get Yourself Pain Free

Often, many mistake pain as the main problem and look for ways of curing pain. You might take different painkillers to subside your pain. You also feel that if you do not feel any more pain, you are fine and do not need any further medication. This is not true, as mostly, pain is your body’s indicator to inform that something is wrong with your body and it needs immediate attention. Again, chronic pain is a dangerous signal by your body indicating you lack nutrients, sleep, oxygen, and even a stress free life.

Therefore, it is more necessary to look into major causes of your pain rather than to treat only the pain. Main causes for pain are lack of hormonal support, insufficient sleep, infections, or inadequate nutritional support.

Hormonal Support: If you have sufficient and healthy hormonal support, you do not suffer from most pains like those of adrenal, ovarian, thyroid, or testicular. If you are deficient in any hormone, you can cure your pain by taking hormonal supplements in small dosages, which are then safe for use too.

Insufficient Sleep: You cannot enjoy sound sleep if you are in pain. Your body needs around eight to nine hours of sleep to recoup fully and renew energy levels. Lack of sound and enough sleep also causes pain. In fact, most pain disappears, if you have sound sleep. You can take different natural remedies like Jamaican Dogwood, Wild Lettuce, Passionflower, Hops, Theanine, Valerian, etc, which induce sleep and do not have any side effects. Additionally, such sleep inducers also cure you of muscular pain, headaches, joint pain, etc., which are primarily due to lack of sufficient sleep and associated rest for different body parts.

Infections: Infections cannot affect you if you have a strong and healthy immune system. If you suffer from a deficient immune system, you are often at the receiving end of most infections like viral, fungal, or parasitic. Obviously, these infections bring along various pains with them and you suffer from due to lack of efficient immune system to fight away infections. The best recourse is to stay healthy and develop a good internal immune system to fight away infections and pain.

Inadequate Nutritional Support: Your body needs sufficient nutrition to build, protect, and heal your body organs. Most people lack necessary vitamins and minerals like magnesium, iron, zinc, vitamins like vitamin B, and E or essential fatty acids and proteins like amino acids. You can take energy supplements on a daily basis to fulfill your nutritional requirements. These also cure most of your pains, help heal joints and cure most arthritic pains. Glucosamine sulfate and SAM-e (pronounced Sammy) are typical examples of such essential nutritional supplements. SAM-e is slightly expensive. I buy mine at www.vitacost.com they have many reasonably priced nutrients. It really helps. I started using half my pain pills within two days of using SAM-e. Do not use SAM-e if you are on antidepressants.

45. How to Avoid Running Injuries

Running is a very effective form of exercise. It is common with people of all age groups. However, running can cause major skeletal and muscular injuries and can at times aggravate inherent injuries, which come to the fore by overexertion during running. Hence, you need to pay extra attention to your body indications and stop or reduce your running limits to avoid muscular or ligament tears.

A few steps to avoid running injuries are -

- Avoid over-enthusiasm and plan your training strategies. Do not strain body muscles by running long stretches without adequate rest periods.
- Give sufficient time for your body to adapt to running schedules. Increase distances gradually to reduce extensive running injuries. You can judge your correct speed if you are able to converse easily while running. You should not become breathless.
- Stretching and strengthening exercises before running can prevent running injuries. You can also do certain stretching exercises of the lower extremities after running. These ease your muscles and you can avoid most running injuries.
- Avoid running on hard surfaces as it causes greater stress on your feet leading to injuries. Similarly, running on hilly terrain or slant surfaces also causes severe injuries to your tendons, legs, and feet. Try to run only on flat and plain ground.

- Wear proper running shoes depending on your running capabilities and limits. Normally, running shoes lose their shock absorption power after five to seven hundred kilometers. Hence, you should replace running shoes often to avoid injuries while running.
- Running puts excessive stress on your feet. Hence, you can use various orthopedic devices to reduce fractures and other skeletal injuries to your feet and legs.
- Normal running limits extend to around forty-five miles per week. If you try to exceed such limits, you exert excessive stress on your muscles causing injuries.
- Besides, do not run if you are in pain. Instead, take sufficient rest for around two to three days and start running only if you feel perfect.
- Alternate hard and easy running days, as it does not put pressure on your limbs daily. Increase running limits gradually, only when you feel comfortable.

46. How to Avoid Yoga Injuries

To most people, yoga is the answer to all their physical and other ailments. It has a wide range of postures and exercises, which covers just about everyone – from the young to aged, fit to disabled, and helps better their quality of life.

Though, if you are a new yoga enthusiast, do not let all these feel good factors affect your judgment. Yoga, like any other form of exercise, has its pitfalls, which you can ignore only at your own peril. Quite a number of people have suffered injuries, sometimes chronic, due to the wrong practice of yoga. Therefore, you can ignore this advice at your own peril.

Here are a few tips that will help you have an injury-free yoga session:

- Let your body lead the way. If at any point during a yoga pose, you feel uncomfortable, and are in pain, then you should immediately stop.
- Breathing is an essential part of yoga. If you concentrate on your breathing rhythm, you will know when you are straining too hard.
- Do not try to keep up with the contortionists. Not everyone has a flexible and agile body and you should know your own limits.
- Enjoy what you do. This is a basic rule of any exercise. If you do not enjoy any poses, you can feel free to skip them.
- Always consult your medical practitioner and physical instructor before jumping into yogic poses. Without proper consultation, you run the risk of aggravating any previous injuries.

47. How to Keep Your Workouts on Track And Avoid Pain

Do you know?

Every year, over 1 million middle-aged people are treated for sports injuries across the United States!

Most of the exercise-related injuries were a result of overuse or, in some cases, even abuse, of a certain set of muscles. This was because these people were indulging in just one or two forms of exercises.

People with burgeoning waistlines should remember that you put nearly one third of your weight on your feet when you walk. Add to this, the padding on the heels and balls of your feet thin as you grow older. This means that walking as an exercise can also cause injuries if you are not careful.

These facts made you sit up and notice. No? You probably thought that those aches and pains that you suffered from were part of your exercise regimen. Think again. You are probably unaware about the extent of damage you have been doing.

A person in the 35-56 age groups is exceptionally vulnerable to injuries. Tired muscles that can no longer take your daily battering cause most of these injuries.

One way you can avoid these injuries is by accepting the fact that your body is aging and that the tissues in your body are degenerating. If you have exercised all your life, then it does slow down the degeneration, but it does not stop it.

Therefore, you need to slow down, listen to your body, and adjust your exercise to suit its capabilities.

One thing you can do is alternate between different forms of exercise like swimming, walking, and cycling. This rotation will benefit your entire body and will help your muscles get much-needed rest.

However, before you take up any form of exercise, speak to your medical practitioner to know if a particular exercise may cause you any damage. If you have just begun exercising, get yourself a good trainer who will put you through the motions, and will help you avoid possible injuries.

I've gathered the information in this book to help you. I've heard many excuses such as: I'm in a wheelchair. I may sound mean, but even in a wheelchair you can do something more than you did the day before. If you do not use your body, it will degenerate at a lot faster pace than what you want to happen to you. Aging is a necessary evil, however, you must stay as active as possible. Pain can be worked through, but you must make sure you talk about it with your doctor or therapist.

I will never forget the two years, I could not stand up for more than two minutes at a time. My thighs would shake, then ache, and my lower back just killed. I'd take a plastic lawn chair with me to walk down the hill to get my mail. I was gaining weight and not very happy about it. I was afraid.

I was afraid to work through the pain because my doctors did not know what was wrong with me. I had everything imaginable checked, even my heart, and no one could find anything, and so I ordered a Tony Little Gazelle, (this machine is easy on the joints) and when it arrived, I began my journey, one minute, two minutes, three minutes everyday until I could walk a mile, then

two, then three, and I started taking off the weight I'd gained. And, I do not, to this day, know what caused the pain. It started the night my daughter-in-law went into labor. Could it have been psychological sympathy pain? I don't know.

I do know that facing and working through the pain helped a lot.

A year later, I ruptured a disk in my neck, and once again, I faced pain. I still have pain at this writing, but I do many things that are mentioned in this book, and it DOES help, more than you can imagine, than not doing anything at all. Complaining and feeling sorry for yourself, makes things worse. Negativity begets negativity. Keep yourself cheerful and it does do you and those that have to live around you, a world of good.

To your health and freedom from the prison of pain.

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