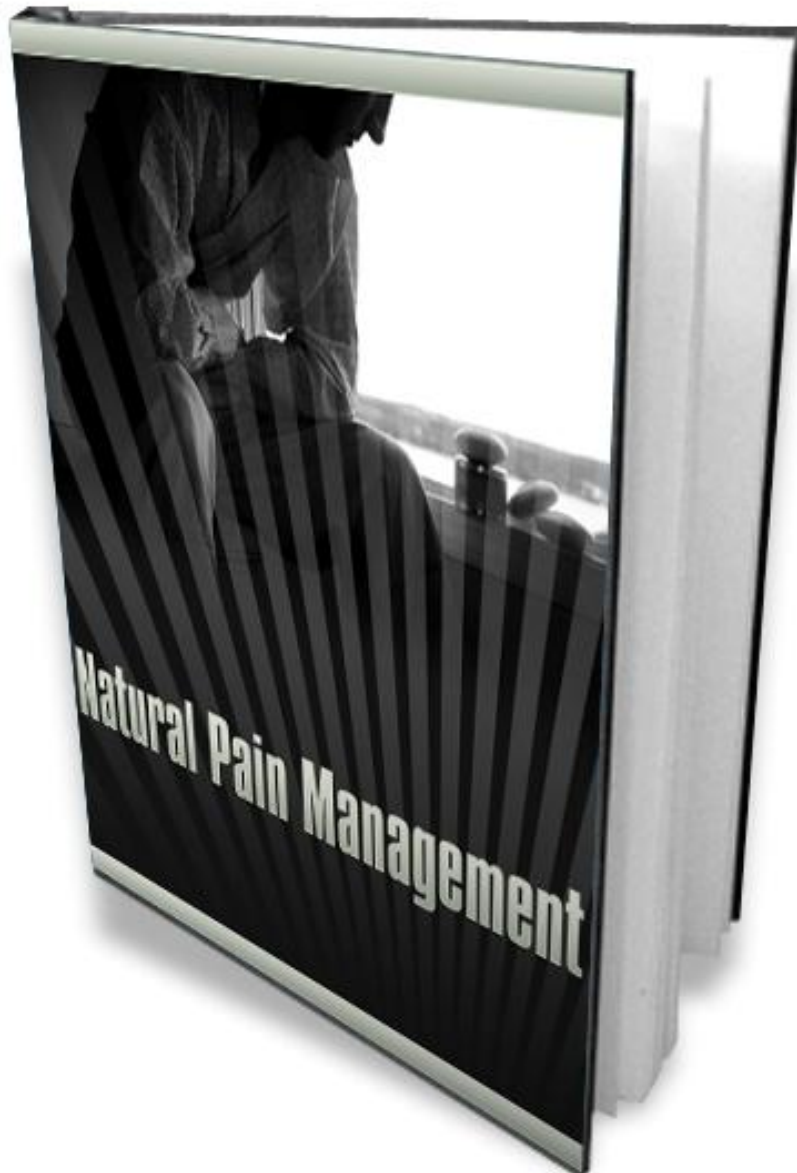


Natural Pain Management

Natural pain management





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Introduction

Pain is a fact of life that many thousands of people all over the world live with every day of their lives. For many who are in chronic (long-term) pain, this means that it is something they have to live with every waking moment of every day, which is likely to make life very miserable indeed.

The fact is that all of us, probably every single individual on the face of planet earth is either already familiar with pain or will have episodes of pain at some point in our lives yet to materialize. Does this therefore mean that we have to accept pain as an inevitable fact of life?

The unfortunate answer to the question is probably yes because unless you live in a cotton-wool lined cocoon for every moment of every day, it is almost impossible to avoid the kind of accidents that inevitably cause pain and discomfort. However, in a situation like this, the pain is usually temporary and no matter how acute it might be at the time, it passes fairly quickly.

If you trap your finger in the door or smack yourself on the back of the hand with a hammer, yes, it hurts like the devil and the pain will be excruciatingly intense, of that there is no doubt. If you fall off your bike and crack your knee off the concrete, it hurts and even getting an unintentional kick or smack playing sports does not hurt any less because your opponent didn't mean to cause you pain.

However, by definition, acute pain of this type usually passes and whilst trapping your finger in the door or falling off your bike can leave an



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injury that hurts for a few days, it is nevertheless still a relatively temporary pain situation that you are in. But these are also times when pain relief is something that you will probably seek, because the basic truth is that mankind in general is not very good at dealing with pain without some kind of external intervention.

If you have a finger or knee that is sore for several days, imagine how much worse it must be if you had to live with constant chronic pain, pain that nags at you each and every day of your life. If you are one of the fortunate ones who has never had to put up with long term pain, it is probably hard to imagine a situation where pain is a constant in your life but there are thousands of people for whom this represents their everyday reality.

Of course, over the course of the past 112 years since [Felix Hoffman](#) managed to produce a stable form of acetylsalicylic acid, better known as aspirin, man has developed many chemical-based painkillers that are used by millions all over the world each and every day.

Many of these drugs are pretty effective as painkillers but this does not change the fact that, as with all chemical-based pharmaceuticals, there are potential side effects attached to many of these drugs.

There are also quite significant numbers of people who cannot take these drugs too, people who are either allergic to them or are taking other medicines which prohibit them from taking particular types of painkillers. For example, for thousands of people all over the world who



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take a daily anticoagulant tablet like [warfarin sodium](#) or heparin, aspirin is a definite no-go as it too has the ability to thin the blood.

Thus, whilst not denying the effectiveness of painkilling drugs, there are a perhaps surprisingly large number of people who cannot use chemical-based painkillers. In addition, there are many thousands of people who do not want to use chemical-based analgesics (painkiller) because they understand that medical science is not perfect, and that whilst the majority of side effects of most commonly used painkillers are known, there may well be side effects that have not yet been discovered.

There are therefore a lot of people who are looking for natural ways of dealing with pain for one reason or another.

This manual is going to present you with many different natural pain management options so that if you choose to follow the natural route to get rid of your pain, you are aware of the options and the possible disadvantages of various different ways of managing pain.

What is pain?

The word pain can be used in many different ways, so it is probably worth defining exactly we mean by the word pain in the context of this report.

Throughout this report, I am dealing with physical pain as opposed to the kind of general life-encompassing suffering that can make every day a misery. The type of pain we are talking about here does not for example include the kind of pain that you might suffer if you have no money or are homeless, emotional desperation brought on by family bereavement and so on

As we have all felt physical pain from time to time, we all know what it is but finding an accurate definition is actually far harder than it might at first appear like it should be.

For example, whilst the [International Association for the Study of Pain](#) defines it as 'an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage', it is important to understand that pain is actually highly subjective.

What one person might consider an agonizing pain could be nothing more than a minor irritant to someone else, and people who suffer from chronic pain every day gradually forget about it to some degree even though the pain does not go away.



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For this reason, it is sometimes suggested that the definition provided by a noted pain control expert [Margo McCaffrey](#) in 1968 might be viewed as more accurate. She said that 'pain is whatever the experiencing person says it is, existing whenever he says it does'.

What is certainly indisputable is the fact that almost half of visits to doctors and medical practitioners in the USA every year are as a result of a pain problem that the patient wants solving.

When this happens, your doctor will usually do two things.

Firstly, they will try to characterize the pain itself using various different criteria or descriptions such as intensity, type of pain (throbbing, dull, burning etc), reason for the pain and bodily location.

After asking these questions, if there is no clear reason for the pain, they will examine you to find out why you are suffering the way you are as there is clearly some underlying reason for your pain of which you are not fully aware.

Generally speaking, pain will go away with simple treatments such as rest and of course through the use of painkilling analgesic medicines. However, we have already seen that many people suffer chronic pain, a pain that becomes a medical condition in itself and does not go away of its own accord or as a result of simple treatments.

Pain is an essential part of the body's defense mechanism, a natural reflex reaction telling you to back off from something that has the potential to cause damage to you. Furthermore, it also help you to change your behavior so that whatever it was that caused you pain is



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not repeated, thereby protecting against further physical harm or damage.

Pain is a conscious sensation – sometimes we are too conscious of it, and it can strike anytime, anywhere, either as a result of a traumatic accident or because of the sudden or gradual onset of an unexpected medical problem.

A banner with a dark background and a sunburst pattern. The text "Natural Pain Management" is written in a light, sans-serif font. On the right side, there is a partial view of a person's shoulder and arm in a striped shirt.

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It starts at the very beginning...

Perhaps surprisingly, it is generally believed that when we are born, every human being already has built-in natural pain control mechanisms.

Furthermore, it is posited that in our caveman days, these natural pain management processes or substances (hormones, enzymes and other naturally occurring chemicals in the body) would be activated almost from birth because the need to protect themselves against harm and pain was so much greater in those days.

After all, even then, millions of years ago, our antecedents felt pain but they did not have aspirin or ibuprofen that they could take to get rid of it when pain struck. Whilst some suggest that herbal remedies for pain relief date from these times, it is still nevertheless the fact that people back then had far less in the way of effective pain relief available, hence the belief that natural pain control mechanisms were far more prevalent.

This is important to understand because more recent research has built on this by indicating that these natural mechanisms have not entirely disappeared.

However, the world that a newborn baby arrives in is nowadays a very different world to that of our caveman forbears. Thus, there is some evidence that modern life simply fails to 'switch on' these natural pain control processes.



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This was highlighted in a [study at the University of Maryland in Baltimore](#) which indicated that sugar and suckling activate these natural pain control processes in very young babies. Furthermore, they also established that these control mechanisms seem to have something to do with the spinal column, although as the research was not conducted on human beings, the exact relevance of this to man has still to be established with any degree of certainty.

Nevertheless, the research suggested that a few minutes of suckling and the rendition of sugar water to babies could significantly reduce the level of pain felt by laboratory animals a few moments later.

This is an important consideration for any expectant parents as it suggests that from the day that baby is born, it is possible to build up their natural resistance to pain relatively quickly and easily.

Whilst there clearly needs to be more study on this, it is definitely something to bear in mind if you are an expert parent or anticipate becoming one.

A quick overview of analgesic pain solutions

Over the counter painkillers

Aspirin is still one of the most widely used analgesic painkillers and as you can buy aspirin in almost any convenience store, it is a medicine that thousands of people all over the world use whenever they have a minor pain such as a headache or some other similar condition.

Technically speaking, aspirin is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (an NSAID) and was the first drug of its type to be discovered and isolated. For the vast majority of people, aspirin is a relatively safe medicine to take, although as previously suggested, it is a medicine to be avoided for people who are already taking other medicines with which it might interact.

In addition however, it is estimated that approximately 1% of people suffer from an aspirin allergy which is most commonly seen on the skin in the form of hives, rashes, and swellings. An aspirin allergy can bring on asthma attacks in people who already have a susceptibility to asthma, with an estimated 10% of asthma sufferers likely to suffer this form of allergic reaction to aspirin. This can extend as far as developing into anaphylaxis (a severe life-threatening allergic reaction) in a worst-case scenario.

Aspirin can also cause upset stomachs and diarrhea, as well as bleeding (both internal and external) and bruising as a result of its anticoagulant capabilities.

In a very small number of cases, aspirin can lead to [Reye's Syndrome](#) which is a potentially fatal condition characterized by damage to many internal organs, especially the liver and the brain. Given the seriousness of this particular condition, early diagnosis of Reye's Syndrome is absolutely essential because otherwise brain damage or death could be the result.

Reye's syndrome passes through five distinct stages with the first being characterized by heavy vomiting that is not reversed by eating, general lethargy, nightmares and all-round confusion. If anyone who is taking aspirin exhibits any of these symptoms, it is absolutely critical to get them to a doctor or emergency hospital as quickly as possible.

[Paracetamol \(and Tylenol\) \(acetaminophen\)](#) is another widely used and generally available analgesic as well as being effective for reducing fever as well. For this reason, it is widely used as a treatment for headaches, fever and other minor aches and pains.

Paracetamol is technically known as an [aniline analgesic](#) and is the only one still widely used for the treatment of pain, because all other similar analgesics were withdrawn as they were believed to exhibit carcinogenic qualities (which so far, paracetamol does not). However, the fact that it is made from coal tar may give you a reason to question this as carbon is often believed to have carcinogenic qualities as well.

In normal doses, one of the advantages of paracetamol is that it does not irritate the stomach lining or affect blood coagulation in the same way that NSAID's like aspirin do.



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However, higher than recommended usage has been seen to have a potential connection with gastrointestinal bleeding and very high dosages have the capacity to [cause liver damage](#), which in the most severe cases can be fatal. Indeed, paracetamol or tylenol poisoning is the number one cause of acute liver failure in most Western countries and the way that most people choose to commit suicide in these countries as well.

Furthermore, a massive study conducted in 31 countries and involving over 200,000 children in 2008 and reported in the [leading medical journal 'The Lancet'](#) found that the use of paracetamol in the first year of life made children far more likely to develop asthmatic symptoms at around age six or seven. In addition, children who took paracetamol during the first year of life and also children who took the drug at ages 6-7 demonstrated a far higher likelihood of developing eczema and rhinoconjunctivitis later too.

[Ibuprofen](#) (Advil, Nuprin etc) and [Naproxen](#) (Aleve) are both NSAID's like aspirin. They therefore share many of the potential side effects that have already been highlighted as being endemic to aspirin. For instance, aspirin allergy, upset stomach and a higher risk of asthma attacks can be equally ascribed to both of these medicines as they can to aspirin.

Ibuprofen however carries additional risks as it is believed to increase the risk of myocardial infarction (heart attack) if taken in high dosages and you can also cause or exacerbate irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's



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disease and ulcerative colitis due to its capability of starting gastrointestinal bleeding.

With Naproxen, some of the most widely [reported side-effects](#) include constipation or diarrhea, drowsiness, upset stomach, stuffy nose and heartburn.

However, whilst the NSAID's already detailed are likely to carry a slight increase in risk levels for heart attacks and strokes, the risk associated with Naproxen might be considerably more serious. Indeed, the National Institute of Health [terminated a trial](#) into the effects of Naproxen as a drug for reducing the severity of Alzheimer's disease (in 2006) because of the suspicion that the drug significantly increased the risk of heart attack or stroke.

Since that time, further analysis suggests that at normal dosages, the increased risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke is fairly low although as you will see in the next section, this is certainly not true of all NSAID's.

Prescription drugs

As a general observation, most of the pharmaceutical painkillers that are prescribed by doctors fall into one of two categories.

The first group is made up of stronger non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs than those that are available across the counter such as aspirin and ibuprofen. The second group of drugs that your doctor may prescribe to deal with your pain is the opiate or synthetic opiate-based drugs.

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Let's take each in turn starting with a small selection of the more common NSAID's that your doctor might prescribe.

[Celecoxib \(Celebrex\)](#), [Diclofenac \(Volteran, Naklofen, Arbitren etc\)](#) and [Tramadol \(Ultram\)](#) are all NSAID's that bring with them the usual potential adverse side-effects of taking drugs of this nature such as an increased risk of internal and external bleeding, bruising, upset stomachs, constipation and nausea etc.

However, unlike Naproxen with which it now appears that the increased risk of suffering a heart attack or stroke at normal dosage is small, the risk is significantly higher with both Celecoxib and Diclofenac.

Furthermore, the risk seems to be increased irrespective of the dosage although of course the risk is going to become larger as your dosage is increased.

[Research indicates](#) that the increased heart attack and stroke risk factor is 1.63 compared to non-users. Nevertheless, this represents an increased risk that it is suggested many chronic pain sufferers will tolerate in return for the greater pain management capabilities of these drugs in comparison to weaker drugs such as aspirin. In effect, it seems that many pain sufferers know the increased risks and are willing to live with them to get rid of their pain.

In addition, the risk of suffering liver or kidney damage appears to be increased with all three drugs included in this category and should such damage occur, it appears that in most cases, it is likely to be irreversible.



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[Demerol](#), [Vicodin](#) and [Lorcet](#) are all drugs that are based on natural or synthetic opiate based drugs that are used to treat various different medical conditions and pain caused by these conditions.

Demerol is a drug that contains pethidine which for the majority of the 20th century was the most commonly favored opiate based drug, with 60% of doctors being reported as prescribing it for acute pain and 23% prescribing it for chronic pain in 1983. The popularity of the drug stemmed from the fact that it was supposed to be safer whilst also being stronger than morphine-based drugs which were the major alternative available at the time.

Since that time however, this has been proved incorrect. Indeed, because of the short duration of its effectiveness and low potency, it is debatable whether Demerol was ever really effective at all.

On the other hand, it carries a far more significant risk of causing neuropathological problems such as delirium and seizures than many other competing medicines, hence it is only prescribed very rarely nowadays. In fact, several countries such as Australia have either placed severe limits on the use of Demerol or banned it altogether.

The side effects of Vicodin are fortunately not as severe as those of Demerol, with the most common being nausea, upset stomach, light-headedness or dizziness. In more rare cases, Vicodin can cause allergic reactions, unconsciousness, jaundice, bleeding, bruising, constipation and altered sex drive, but these are the exceptions, rather than the norm.



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One Vicodin problem that is significant is the fact that it is a drug to which it is easy to develop resistance relatively quickly. Consequently, many people are tempted to take progressively larger doses of Vicodin in an effort to combat the effects of increasing bodily familiarity with the drug which will naturally decrease its effectiveness.

Whilst increasing the dosage in this way will fight the pain more quickly and more effectively, all opiate-based drugs are addictive and obviously, the more of them you take, the more quickly it is likely that you become addicted. Vicodin can be highly addictive due to the presence of [hydrocodone](#) but whilst increasing the rate at which you take the drug to alleviate your pain will work, the damaging effects in both social and medical terms could be extremely harmful.

Becoming addicted to Vicodin represents a classic case of being addicted to prescription drugs and even though this is a prescribed drug, this does not make the addiction any worse. For example, reports of significant social and legal problems for Vicodin addiction sufferers are common as they visit doctor after doctor after doctor to try to get a prescription to feed their increasingly ravenous appetite

The 'potential adverse side-effects' of Vicodin therefore go way beyond the short term physical or medical side-effects highlighted earlier. Rather, they encompass many far more damaging side-effects which can and will adversely affect the quality of your life if you become addicted to this particular drug.



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Remember, all opiate based drugs are naturally addictive so you must always apply a great deal of caution with any drug of this type.

As suggested, the ingredient in Vicodin that makes it so addictive is hydrocodone, and if you followed the earlier link, you may have noticed that amongst the brand names that are associated with this particular drug is Lorcet.

Hence, this particular medicine also has significant addictive qualities too. Addicts often demonstrate serious liver problems whilst an overdose of Lorcet or any other hydrocodone-based medicine can lead to respiratory depression, heart failure, heart attack, jaundice, seizures, blackouts, amnesia and ultimately death.

Furthermore, because many opiate-based drugs include acetaminophen (our old friend paracetamol or Tylenol), even relatively minor overdoses have the capability of causing jaundice or even serious, irreversible liver damage in many patients.

To sum up...

All pharmaceutical analgesics have potential side-effects, ranging from relatively mild problems such as upset stomachs or a touch of diarrhea to serious, irreversible problems like liver or heart failure, drug addiction and death.

Of course, for the vast majority of people, most of the worst side-effects of taking chemical-based pharmaceutical analgesics are never likely to be something that affects them. Nevertheless, the fact is, if only one in a hundred people suffers an allergic reaction to aspirin or



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one in 10 finds that their asthma has been exacerbated by taking the same drug, the odds of suffering an adverse side-effect are probably far higher than you had ever previously imagined.

The case for avoiding these drugs if at all possible is therefore extremely strong which brings us to the point of considering what alternatives there might be. Fortunately, there are many entirely natural alternatives available for anyone who is looking for effective pain management and these alternatives will provide the focus for the rest of this book.

What kind of pain do you have?

One important consideration that your doctor will take into account before they prescribe pharmaceutical analgesics is the type of pain that you are suffering from.

They will take into account whether it is a chronic or acute pain and whether there is any underlying condition or situation that is causing the pain before deciding upon what medicine to give you. A similar situation will apply if you are buying over-the-counter painkillers well, because whilst paracetamol or Tylenol might be very effective for dealing with fever and the pain from and associated with a headache, aspirin will be far less effective for dealing with a fever problem.

Similar considerations apply when you are looking at natural pain management solutions as well because some solutions will work better in some pain management situations than they will in others.

Furthermore, if you have a specific medical condition or situation that is causing pain, some natural pain management solutions are likely to be more appropriate than others.

As an example, the painkilling approach that you use to get rid of a headache or backache is likely to be significantly different to the approach that you adopt if you are trying to combat the pain caused by cancer or it's treatment or the various aches and pains associated with pregnancy and childbirth.

Hence, many of the solutions that are going to be explained are likely to be more effective in certain circumstances or situations than in others.



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You need to know what kind of pain it is that you need to combat before deciding upon the best way of using completely natural pain management strategies, tactics and ideas to minimize the adverse effects of your problems.

Massage for pain relief

There are apparently over 80 different styles of massage and body therapy, many of which have been developed by individual practitioners who have taken the original massage idea and developed it as a result of their practical experiences.

Furthermore, there are many associated practices like reflexology and shiatsu which are broadly associated but not entirely synonymous with massage that some people sometimes confuse with massage.

The basic concept of massage as a pain relief strategy is that rubbing and massaging various different points of your body confuses or 'side-tracks' your ability to register pain according to what is known as the 'gate control theory'.

This theory is based upon the concept that pain impulses travel from various different parts of your body through the central nervous system and your spinal column to the brain. It is only when these pain signals arrive in your brain that you register pain although of course, it is a matter of a very small number of nanoseconds between the stimuli happening at some place or point on your body and your brain registering pain.

The 'gate control theory' explanation of why massage works as a pain relief strategy is based on the idea that your body only has the ability to send a certain number of signals to your brain at any one time, and if certain signals do not reach your brain, they will not be 'registered'. Consequently, when you are enjoying a relaxing massage, the rubbing



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and stroking sends other far more pleasurable signals to your brain, thus 'populating' the nerves that carry these signals with a positive message leaving no room for the negative pain message to get through.

There is also some evidence that pleasurable massage results in the release of [endorphins](#) which are enzymes produced by the pituitary gland, the positive effects of which resemble the effects of opiate drugs. However, as endorphins are entirely natural and their production is strictly controlled by your body, there is no potential harm involved in experiencing the happiness or exhilaration that is often known as an 'endorphin rush'.

Furthermore, endorphins also prevent nerve cells releasing more pain signals, which is for example one of the reasons why top sports people can often continue to compete even when they are injured, because extreme activity allied to excitement prompts the 'rush' that masks the pain.

The following are the forms of massage that are most commonly associated with providing pain relief.

Swedish massage

Swedish massage is a massage style that was first developed in Scandinavia nearly 200 years ago by [Pehr Henrik Ling](#) who learned many of the basics that he would later develop into Swedish massage from a Chinese fellow named Ming with whom he sailed for four years.



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After returning to Copenhagen, he developed these ideas still further into something similar to what we recognize as Swedish massage which was first brought to the USA in the 1850s.

From just a small handful of Swedish massage clinics in Boston and Washington, they can now be found in almost every city and town throughout the USA (and throughout most other western countries as well). Hence, Swedish massage is the most popular form of massage in the USA and if using this type of massage to bring pain relief sounds like something you might work for you, it should be relatively easy to find a local practitioner.

The basic concept of Swedish massage is that it focuses on long, gliding strokes of the masseuse hands across your skin, with some 'kneading' (the exact same action as if you were making bread) allied to the application of friction techniques to some of the most obvious muscle groups.

Most commonly, the majority of strokes go towards the heart, following the blood flow because there is an emphasis on stimulating blood flow through the soft bodily tissues. This form of massage can be practiced in a relatively vigorous and not so gentle manner or it can be very soft and gentle on the other hand, depending upon circumstances and requirements.

Swedish massage is commonly used to prompt a wide range of benefits including all of the following:



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- It helps relax muscles. Hence, if you have a muscle pain caused by stress, tension or even a slight muscle damage, massage can loosen the muscle and thereby reduce the pain and sometimes also the swelling too.
- It can help to reduce the pain from other bodily damage such as fractures, sprains, sciatica, stiff joints and strains. This applies equally to people who have suffered injuries and to those who are simply feeling the adverse effects of getting older!
- There are certain substances in the body that naturally slow down the process of recovering from muscle strains, sprains and damage. Because Swedish massage is effective for removing uric and lactic acid (and other waste products) from your muscles, it helps to speed up the recovery process, meaning that any pain you are suffering will disappear more quickly.
- As Swedish massage can be used to help to stretch muscles, tendons and ligaments, it helps to prevent the kind of damage that might cause pain at a later date. In effect, Swedish massage is not only curative but preventative too.
- In general terms, Swedish massage helps to stimulate improved blood circulation, relaxes the nerves and stimulates the nervous system at one and the same time. It also helps to reduce stress and tension which can be a cause of physical pain as tensed up muscles are far more likely to suffer damage or injury the muscles that are loose and flexible.



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The bottom line is that 95% people who undergo Swedish massage leave their session feeling markedly better in many, many different ways, both physically and psychologically.

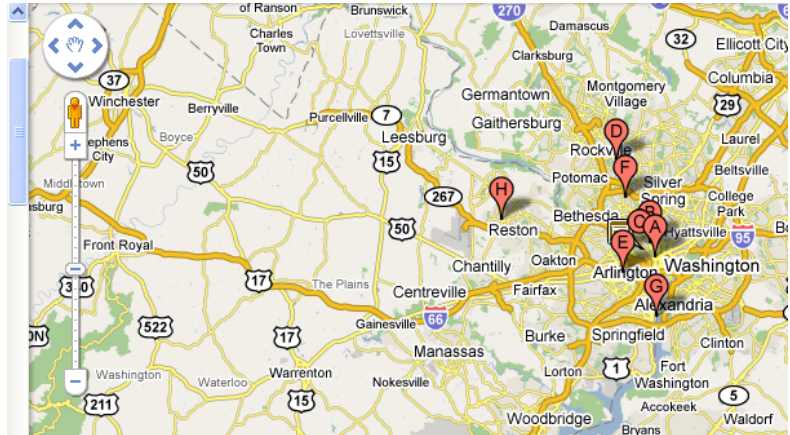
The benefits of Swedish massage for anyone who is suffering any of the particular types of pain highlighted in the previous list are undeniable. If therefore you are suffering muscle, joint or sprain pains, trying Swedish massage before resorting to analgesic painkillers has got to make sense.

In order to find a local Swedish massage center, the most effective tool to use is [Google maps](#) to find what you're looking for (as it is with pretty much anything nowadays).

In this case, a search for 'Swedish massage Washington' turns up quite a few results although I have no doubt that searching for something a little less specific and narrowly defined (for example 'massage') would probably generate considerably more results, but they would be considerably less well targeted:

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- A** [Touch Studio of Massage](#) - [more info >](#)
1234 19th St NW #600, Washington, DC -
(202) 429-8666
[2 reviews](#) - [Write a review](#)
"I have been searching around town for a **massage** therapist who can deliver ..."
- B** [Henschel Laura, LMT](#) - [more info >](#)
3000 Connecticut Ave, NW, Washington, DC -
(202) 667-1724
Category: Services - **Massage Therapy**: deep tissue, pre-natal
[Write a review](#)
[Coupons >](#)
- C** [DC Deep Tissue Massage](#) - [more info >](#)
1826 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC -
(301) 910-1725
[Write a review](#)



On the right you have your map whilst on the left there is a list of all the businesses highlighted on the map. Run a similar search for your own local town or city and you should see broadly similar results.

Deep muscle massage

As the name would probably suggest, the concept of deep muscle massage is to work the muscles more thoroughly than is common in Swedish massage, with the ultimate objective being the release of deep muscle tension to reduce potential muscle pain and stress.

Using this particular form of massage, the masseuse will usually use direct pressure or friction allied with slow strokes as a way of 'digging' deeper into the muscles fibers and tissues to alleviate the deepest tension. This is not to suggest that deep muscle massage needs to be painful but it is far more noticeable than Swedish massage, as are the beneficial effects.



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With this particular technique, the movements are most commonly carried out across the muscle fibers in a 'cross grain' pattern and applied with the fingers, thumbs or perhaps sometimes even elbows. Because of this, the effects are likely to most beneficial to those who have deep muscle tensions, strains and aches that cause them discomfort or pain. Consequently, if Swedish massage does not really provide the pain relief that you need, it might benefit you to consider going one stage further with deep muscle massage.

Thai massage

Thai massage was originally believed to have originated in India where it was heavily influenced by Ayurvedic ideas and philosophy before migrating to Thailand some 2500 years ago.

From that time to this, the original massage techniques that came from India have been increasingly influenced by traditional Chinese medicine so that what we now recognize as Thai massage represents a physical manifestation of a combination of the two great medical traditions of the East.

With the original antecedents of Thai massage coming from India, you may not find it a great surprise to realize that this particular form of massage is often called Thai Yoga Massage, as some people describe it as undertaking a yoga session without doing the exercise yourself.

It is a form of massage that is considerably more demanding and energizing than Swedish massage for example, which of course means that if you suffer serious physical problems of any form, you should



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consult your doctor before considering undertaking a Thai massage session.

The massage itself is usually performed whilst the 'patient' is on the floor and involves the masseuse using their hands, legs, knees and feet to provide the massage. In a similar (but different way) to deep muscle massage, Thai massage gets down to the deepest levels of your muscles and joints, providing relief that Swedish massage may not be capable of providing.

People who have undergone Thai massage will tell you that it is both incredibly relaxing and energizing at exactly the same time, and that muscle aches, pains and strains will go away after the initial 'buzz' has subsided.

Once again, if you have muscle pains or aches and Swedish massage does not do the job for you, this is another alternative to consider trying.

Acupuncture – the great pain reliever...

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese art that had been practiced for thousands of years, one that has been proven on many occasions to be extremely effective for promoting general good health but also for relieving pain of many different types and descriptions.

The first thing to understand about acupuncture is that it adopts a holistic view of any medical or even psychological problems that you might be suffering, including physical pain.

In essence, whereas a Western doctor will treat the symptoms of that pain by prescribing a drug that attacks only the area where the pain is felt, an acupuncturist adopts the view that the 'something' that has caused your pain is not necessarily located in that particular part of the body. Consequently, they will try to find the root cause of that pain wherever that may be located in your body before dealing with it.

Acupuncture is based on the concept that every human being contains a 'vital energy' flow that courses around their body and that pains, illnesses or sicknesses are signs that this vital energy flow has been disturbed in some way. Vital energy flows along meridians or 'channels' that are recognized by acupuncture to connect certain apparently unconnected parts of the body to one another.

Hence, when a problem that represents a disturbance in the vital energy flow appears, it is logical that the acupuncturist will address that problem by attempting open up the appropriate energy meridian so that the flow can be stimulated and the problem solved.



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There are certain points along each of these channels or meridians that are recognized by traditional Chinese acupuncturists as being 'acupoints', the places where interruptions most commonly occur. Hence you have the idea that the traditional acupuncturist will insert very fine, long needles through the skin to stimulate these 'acupoints' to free up the vital energy flow.

Nowadays, many traditional acupuncturist still continue with the practice of using needles but there are many alternative forms of acupuncture, such as using small, highly targeted electrical charges on the same 'acupoints' as a way of stimulating the energy flow. Other practitioners have been known to use magnets whilst there is ongoing study and development of using lasers for the same purposes.

One of the problems with acupuncture is that whilst it has been used for in excess of 2000 years as a treatment for pain and illness, it is still not fully understood why acupuncture works as well as it does. Although even medical doctors accept that acupuncture can be a very highly effective treatment for dealing with pain, we (and they) still don't really understand why this should be.

However, as reported [in this article](#), two research studies carried out in the mid-90s provided a very clear indication that for whatever reason acupuncture seems to work so well, it does. This is why the same article reported that acupuncture is the favored nonmedical treatment alternative of the majority of medical doctors.



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There are many theories put forward as to why acupuncture can be such an effective treatment for pain in apparently unconnected areas of the body. One of these theories suggests that acupuncture points stimulate the central nervous system which then releases chemicals and hormones into the spinal column and muscles.

It is further posited that these chemicals and hormones alter the experience or perception of pain whilst also stimulating the body's ability to heal itself considerably more quickly than would happen without acupuncture. Hence, the pain relief is more immediate and as the underlying condition is dealt with more quickly, the pain recedes far more swiftly too.

An alternative theory propounded by Western scientists is that there is some evidence that acupuncture points represent the bodies electromagnetic 'junctions'. Hence, by stimulating the junctions, it frees up the flow of electromagnetic charges throughout the body, which in turn appears to stimulate the flow of natural painkilling chemicals such as endorphins.

Other studies have shown that acupuncture appears to alter the chemistry of the brain by prompting the release of [neurotransmitters](#) and neuro-hormones. In addition, because it also appears as if acupuncture stimulates subtle changes in your central nervous system's ability to deal with pain, there does seem to be some evidence for why acupuncture seems to be such an effective treatment for pain.



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One of the beauties of acupuncture as a natural pain treatment is that unlike massage (as an example), it can be used to treat pain of any type and in any area of the body due to the fact that it is an entirely holistic (whole body) approach to pain management. Whereas as a method of pain relief, massage is very firmly focused on getting rid of muscle pain, acupuncture can be used to address any kind of pain, anywhere in your body.

This is one of the reasons why acupuncture is becoming increasingly widely accepted by the 'traditional' Western medical fraternity who are nowadays increasingly likely to recommend a combination of analgesic painkillers and acupuncture in many situations where pain needs to be dealt with.

For example, this approach is becoming increasingly common for people who suffer post-operative pain. By providing a combination of analgesic painkillers and acupuncture, many doctors have found that they are able to completely rid post-operative patients of pain in a way that analgesics on their own have never been capable of doing at safe dosage levels.

Unlike many natural techniques for bringing relief from pain, acupuncture can be used to deal with almost any kind of pain, a fact which is often unreported or ignored.

For example, many women report that acupuncture can be highly effective [for inducing labor](#) and that many of the pains and stresses of

suffering through pregnancy can also be significantly relieved by acupuncture.

Some women suffer back pains or sciatica whilst pregnant because of the additional weight being carried which acupuncture can significantly reduce. Many women also suffer morning sickness and whilst acupuncture will not necessarily get rid of it, it can provide significant help in reducing the nausea levels that most women feel at this time.

It will do this by putting pressure on the Pericardium 6 acupuncture point which is inside the wrist. A strategy that has been proven time and again to reduce all forms of nausea, including that associated with morning sickness.

Incidentally, as an alternative to acupuncture, you might want to consider using a commercially produced [acupressure band](#) to put pressure on the same acupuncture point as a way of reducing the nausea of morning sickness.

In the last trimester, many women suffer pelvic girdle pain and [according to Swedish studies](#), acupuncture can help relieve these pains too.

The beauty of using acupuncture to reduce the severity of the various aches and pains associated with pregnancy is that by doing so, you reduce or remove the necessity to taking drugs. For some women who are drug intolerant, this is a necessity but even if you do not fall into this category, it obviously makes sense to reduce your reliance on drugs whilst you're carrying baby and during the birth process.



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Another area of pain relief that can be dealt with highly effectively and efficiently with acupuncture is the relief of pain for cancer patients. Because cancer is not one disease (there are over 300 different malignant cancers) and also because chemotherapy treats all of the different forms of cancer in a different way, it is not possible to say that acupuncture is going to be helpful in every case.

Nevertheless, in terms of helping cancer patients get over their pain or the dreaded nausea that is a very common side effect of undergoing chemotherapy, acupuncture can once again be an invaluable additional 'tool' in the pain management toolbox.

[As this article](#) concludes by answering the question which it attributes to many cancer patients 'Can acupuncture help me?', it is likely that acupuncture can 'in all probability help in the care of the cancer patient'.

Whilst it is fair to suggest that we still don't really understand why acupuncture is so effective as a treatment for pain, the overwhelming evidence collected over thousands of years from medical experts all over the world is that acupuncture represent a superbly effective way of dealing with pain, almost irrespective of why or how that pain occurs.

If therefore you suffer pain – especially chronic pain that is unlikely to be dealt with by something that provides more temporary relief such as massage – acupuncture is certainly an option that you should consider.

Whether acupuncture on its own can provide complete pain management or whether you need to use analgesic pharmaceuticals in



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combination with this particular form of natural treatment, if you can use acupuncture to reduce your pain, the level of analgesics you need will be similarly reduced.

Sometimes it is a fact that however we might prefer to use natural treatments to deal with pain, it is impractical to do so from time to time, particularly where pain is particularly extreme. In this case, painkilling drugs may well be necessary but if they can be combined with a natural solution like acupuncture to reduce the amount of drugs necessary, this helps to reduce the toxicity and therefore the potential adverse side-effects that you might be risking by taking these drugs.

Hypnosis for dealing with pain

Does hypnosis to deal with pain effectively?

Whilst for most members of the public, hypnosis is most commonly associated with hilariously funny stage shows where people do apparently crazy things or perhaps with bad TV sitcoms, the view of the medical and psychological community of what hypnosis is all about is very different.

Indeed, since it was first invented by [Franz Anton Mesmer](#) in the 1700, it has become increasingly widely accepted that using hypnosis can deal with or 'treat' many seemingly intractable problems, including the management of chronic pain.

For a long time, the view of many medical professionals was not all that different to the view of people who watch on-stage hypnosis shows, mainly because Western medicine has always tended to assume that finding a solution to a problem always involves 'temperature-taking and shot-giving'. Hence, the idea that something as seemingly esoteric as hypnosis could play any genuine part in dealing with medical or psychological problems was simply too much for people of this nature to take on board.

But the fact is that when scientifically applied by a professionally qualified hypnotherapist, hypnosis is a remarkably effective technique that can be applied to dealing with a huge range of problems and difficulties. For example, hypnosis is often used as a highly effective way of convincing people to stop smoking whilst it is also used to treat

A banner with a dark background and a sunburst pattern. The text "Natural Pain Management" is written in a light, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a grayscale image of a person's hand holding their head in pain.

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those who genuinely want to stop drinking and others who suffer because of a similarly obsessive or addictive personality.

Most importantly, over the last 20 or 30 years, hypnosis has been subjected to the continual scrutiny of many clinical trials and in almost every situation scenario, it has been proved that hypnosis is an effective way of combating pain. People suffering from pains associated with cancer, kidney stones, gallstones, backache and invasive dental and medical procedures have all been treated or dealt with whilst under hypnosis with remarkably successful result.

According to one noted psychiatrist, [Dr David Spiegel M.D.](#) of Stanford University, 'Changing your mental set can change what's going on in your body', and all of the available evidence indicates that this is exactly right as far as dealing with chronic pain is concerned.

During the process of being hypnotized, the subject is lulled into a state of focused concentration, inner absorption plus intensely focused attention and all at exactly the same time as they are completely relaxed. Hence, because of their mental state, the subject in this pre-hypnotic state is able to pick up suggestions far more effectively than they might otherwise do in their conscious state whilst they can also tap into unused mental powers to expand the boundaries of physical possibilities.

Over the years, many papers and studies have provided compelling evidence that hypnosis is highly effective when it comes to dealing with pain.



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For instance, in the April 29, 2000 edition of 'The Lancet', there was a report comparing the results enjoyed by patients under hypnosis with those under standard medical care who were undergoing invasive medical surgery. The results showed that the patients who were hypnotized suffered considerably less pain and anxiety than those who were using standard medical painkillers. In addition, the medical process itself took considerably less time to complete for the hypnotized patients, probably because there was no necessity to keep controlling their pain and calming their anxiety as there was with patients under standard anesthetic.

The final clincher was the fact that post-operation, the patients who had been hypnotized required less than half the amount of painkillers that the patients who had operated on using standard anesthetic procedures did.

This once again highlights the fact that in many cases, hypnosis is used in combination with traditional analgesic or anesthetic practices, although there is no reason why it cannot be used on its own in certain circumstances.

For instance, [Dr. Alexander Levitan](#) who is a medical oncologist in Minnesota reports that he has conducted many operations including tracheotomies and hysterectomies using nothing but hypnosis as the anesthetic.

There are many different theories as to why hypnosis would work in such a situation, with some suggesting that because hypnosis alters



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your expectations or perceptions of how intense the pain is going to be, this changes how you experience that pain a little later. Alternatively, another theory suggests that hypnosis focuses your attention on other objectives or images which shifts your primary focus away from concentrating on the pain.

There are many studies currently being carried out to discover exactly why hypnosis is so effective in blocking pain, many of which are focusing on the physiological changes (the changes in your brain) that take place whilst you are under hypnosis.

From these studies, it seems likely that hypnosis activates certain parts of the brain that are concerned with focusing attention. In effect, hypnosis enables your brain to focus on something completely different than the pain. In this way your brain is prevented from bringing the pain that you were previously suffering or were about to suffer to conscious awareness.

So, now you know that pain relief is 100% possible through the use of hypnosis, the next question is, what are you going to do about it?

The first option is to find a hypnotist or hypnotherapist in your neighborhood who can help you by analyzing your problems and then hypnotizing you in order to start addressing your pain.

Finding a suitable hypnotist or hypnotherapist

Before you do this, however, there are a couple of things you should do.



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Firstly, you should talk to your regular doctor or medical practitioner, the person who is presently charged with keeping your pain under control. Understand that when you do so, they may not approve of what you are thinking of doing, especially as by seeking the help of a hypnotist, you are to a certain extent rebuffing their assistance.

Trust me, it is possible that your doctor will react in this way – if they have been treating even sometime, you probably know them better than most, so you may have an idea of how they are likely to react already, but it could happen.

But the fact is, you are not there to ask for their approval or recommendation. What you need to know is whether subjecting yourself to hypnotism poses any real physical health risks, whether for example a pre-existing medical condition could be exacerbated by the experience.

In effect, what you are looking for is the medical all-clear so if your doctor does not approve of the idea of you seeking hypnotism for any reasons other than those which are strictly medical, it is your decision whether you choose to listen to them.

Secondly (and assuming that you decide to go ahead with trying hypnotism), you need to find a hypnotist who is capable of treating the problem that you are going to present to them. Whilst most professional hypnotists or hypnotherapists are going to be able to deal with more 'run of the mill' demands such as people who want to stop smoking and



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so on, not every hypnotist is going to be capable of or comfortable with the idea of dealing with chronic pain.

Consequently, you may need to contact a few appropriately qualified professionals to see whether they can help you. Pay them a visit to see whether you can get along with them, whether they are convincing when they suggest that they can help you and so on.

In short, you need to feel 100% comfortable with the hypnotist or hypnotherapist you are planning to work with because if you are not, there is an immediate element of strain or stress introduced into the relationship which is not going to help you to achieve the results that you're looking for.

The second alternative is to learn self-hypnosis. And if that sounds crazy, prepare to think again!

Can self hypnosis really work?

Can you remember the last time you went to see a movie at the cinema or movie theatre? If you can and it was a popular movie, you were probably not the only person in the cinema, just one of 200 or 300 excited souls waiting for the lights to go down so that the entertainment could begin.

When the house lights were bright, you were probably looking around, fully well aware of all of these people, but as soon as the lights went down and the movie started, you were very quickly completely engrossed (assuming that it was a good movie).



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In this situation, you have effectively switched your point of focus from the real world of which we are all aware to the movie and you have done so completely. To coin a cliché, the real world has ceased to exist and the only world is that of the movie.

The principal of self hypnosis is not especially different to this basic concept. It is all about shifting and concentrating your focus, and the more successfully you can do so, the easier self-hypnosis becomes.

Most encouragingly, it is normally suggested that the ability to hypnotize yourself depends to a large extent on your desire to do so and your need to control your pain. In short, the majority of people who want to control their pain through self hypnosis manage to do so by sheer willpower and force of personality.

Having some guidance of how you can focus your attention at will is probably a useful thing, particularly at the beginning, so consulting a hypnotist or hypnotherapist who can help you to develop your own abilities is likely to be worth the effort. In this way, you get the proper guidance from the beginning and are taught by someone who really knows what they are doing.

On the other hand, there are plenty of web sites where you can learn everything you could ever need to know about self hypnosis, which has the advantage that you can learn self hypnosis in your own time and in the comfort of your own home.

Run a Google search for 'self hypnosis techniques', because doing so will show you just how many self hypnosis of sites there are:



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Results 1 - 10 of about 940,000 for [self hypnosis techniques](#).

Whilst you will probably not be surprised to know that a significant number of these sites are selling self hypnosis materials, many of them are packed with free information and ideas that will help you learn everything you need to know about self hypnosis.

When you do start digging a little deeper, you will perhaps be surprised to realize that the concepts or ideas behind self hypnosis are not nearly as wacky or weird as they might at first appear. For example, as is made clear on this excellent [WikiHow](#) 'How to performance self hypnosis' page, self hypnosis is really nothing more than a twin stage process of relaxing as completely as possible and then focusing on something that takes your mind off the pain that you are trying to escape from.

The relaxed state that is most commonly compared to that of being in a self hypnotized state is the relaxation that is felt by those who meditate regularly.

And, as anyone who meditates on a regular basis will tell you, reaching the level of relaxation you need to achieve your objectives is not something that happens overnight.

In short, you need to learn how to relax as thoroughly as possible and then to keep practicing your relaxation techniques so that you get more and more proficient and become increasingly relaxed as a result of doing so.



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But however crazy it might sound, self hypnosis is an effective way of dealing with pain completely naturally. At the same time, because a critical part of the self hypnosis process is your ability to relax more than you have ever relaxed before, the overall benefits to your health brought about by the inevitable reduction in stress and tension this causes will be a significant boost in your battle against pain.

There is one final alternative that you might like to consider.

I have already mentioned that a Google search will pull up many results related to self hypnosis products or services being sold on the net. Some of these products, many of which are CD or DVD presentations by professional hypnotherapists that will teach you to hypnotize yourself at home may represent an investment that is worth consideration.

Herbs for pain relief

There are plenty of herbs and herbal remedies that are believed to have pain killing qualities, although it is generally accepted that most of these natural remedies are not as powerful as the pharmaceutical alternatives.

Hence, whilst the herbs and herbal treatments recommended in this section of the report will provide relief from some pains and aches, they are unlikely to be effective if you are in extreme, acute or severe chronic pain. Nevertheless, all of these remedies are worth trying if you are in some pain and want to solve the problem naturally and quickly.

Willow bark

It should perhaps be no surprise to know that willow bark is an effective herbal pain killer when you realize that the main active ingredient in aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) is a derivative of salicylic acid which is one of the three main ingredients of the willow bark herb.

It was this connection between the active ingredient in what is still the world's most popular over-the-counter painkiller and the active ingredient in willow bark that originally suggested that it would be a successful herbal painkiller. Unfortunately however, because the absorption rate of salicylic acid from willow bark is somewhat slower than the absorption rate of its chemical cousin and because there is a longer duration, the herbal remedy is not quite as effective as the chemical version.



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On the other hand, there is some evidence that a sustained dose of willow bark over a week or so will start to reduce back pain (a daily dosage of 120 to 240 mg a day is recommended), while other studies suggest that a regular dose of willow bark can help to bring some relief to those suffering osteoporosis without any noticeable side-effects.

However, this is a herb that should be avoided if you have a high level of sensitivity to aspirin or suffer peptic or gastric ulcers. Moreover, if you are susceptible to diabetes, gout or have any form of kidney or liver disease, you should not use willow bark.

Peppers

Peppers or capsicums are a common foodstuff pretty much all the world nowadays, with various varieties of peppers such as jalapenos, cayenne, chili, pimento, paprika and bird's eye chilies being available almost everywhere all the year round.

Peppers of this nature contain a substance called capsaicin and the hotter the chili that you can assume is, the more of this substance it contains. In effect, capsaicin is what gives it its heat, and it is a known fact that eating hot peppers can help to improve circulation, strengthen the nervous system and heart, relieve indigestion and increased appetite as well.

However, it is capsaicin that makes peppers interesting for someone who suffers from constant chronic pain because it is believed that this particular substance has the ability to reduce the levels of the protein that is believed to transport pain signals from the nerve endings to your



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brain. If the levels of this transporter protein which is known as [substance P](#) can be reduced, it stands to reason that your pain will also be reduced in a similar manner, a fact which seems to be borne out by the evidence collected so far.

For example, in clinical tests, creams containing less than one percent capsaicin applied topically to a pained area have been shown to ease the pain associated with shingles and cluster headaches as well as post-amputation and post-mastectomy pain.

Taken internally, capsaicin has been seen to assist in managing various gastrointestinal problems as it stimulates the flow of digestive juices and there is some evidence that the antibacterial qualities of capsaicin can help reduce colds and infections such as flu too.

Boswellia

Boswellia is a tree that is noted for its fragrant resin and it is believed by many that frankincense (the incense mentioned in the Bible) was probably a by-product of one of the four main types of Boswellia tree.

Boswellia resin or extract has long been a staple of Ayurvedic medicine, with some evidence that it is a strong anti-inflammatory and can be used as a natural treatment for asthma as well.

Most importantly from a pain point of view, in a study of 30 patients suffering from osteoporosis of the knee, 1000 mg of Boswellia extract given over a period of eight weeks was shown to produce significant improvements when compared with the group who had been given a placebo.



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In fact, the improvement was in some subjects noted to cause pain to recede by as much as 90% with an attendant increase in mobility and usage of the knee. On the other hand, no significant improvement was noted in the group using placebos.

Whilst most researchers believe that more studies need to be done before the case for Boswellia as a natural painkiller is established beyond all reasonable doubt, the results so far seem extremely encouraging.

Cherry fruits

The beneficial effects of the fruit of the sour cherry ([Prunus cerasus](#)) in humans have not been studied to any great extent so far, but the fact that the fruit contains substances that inhibit the growth of inflammatory enzymes in exactly the same way as does ibuprofen suggest that there are some pain killing possibilities here.

In addition, it is believed that sour cherries possess antioxidant qualities and that they may be effective for helping to inhibit the growth of colonic cancer and perhaps other forms of cancer as well.

Ginger

There is some evidence that including significant amounts of ginger in your diet (naturally or in the form of supplements) will help to offset the pain of osteoporosis and of course, including additional ginger in your diet has no adverse side-effects either.

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In tests, it was indicated that including ginger extract in your daily diet may lower pain levels from osteoporosis by a reasonable amount whilst standing and walking and that overall levels of stiffness caused by the condition should decrease as well.

However, there is no evidence that including additional ginger in your diet is likely to reduce other forms of pain by a significant margin or improve your overall quality of life for anyone who does suffer chronic pain.

Curcumin

[Curcumin](#) is the main polyphenol ingredient that gives turmeric its yellow color and flavor. [Turmeric](#) in turn is a member of the ginger family, which we have already seen possesses some painkilling qualities.

From the point of view of herbal medicine, curcumin has been shown to have very powerful anti-inflammatory qualities at least partially due to the fact that it is believed to contain a powerful [COX-2](#) inhibitor. Indeed, in one study, curcumin was shown to be every bit as effective as [cortisone](#) when it came to dealing with acute inflammation whilst it was half as effective as the drug in dealing with chronic inflammation.

Given these powerful anti-inflammatory qualities, it is perhaps no surprise that curcumin has been shown to help relieve pain in conditions where inflammation is an integral factor in causing pain. Included in this list of conditions where curcumin may be able to help reduce pain are osteoporosis, ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia.



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Although there are no known side effects from using curcumin as a natural painkilling treatment, it is not suitable for those who have hyperacidity problems, stomach ulcers or gallstones.

Conclusion

As anyone who has ever suffered acute or chronic pain is all too well aware, when you are in pain, you need to do something about managing it. And whilst we can all probably live with low-level pain even if it is constant, it is natural that your need to deal with pain increases the worse it gets.

There is no doubt whatsoever that in the West, when pain strikes, our first thought or reaction is to scamper off to the medicine cabinet to see whether we have any aspirins or paracetamol to address the problem with. After all, using analgesic drugs is convenient and quick for most of us when we have a headache or backache and want to do is get rid of it as effectively as possible.

However, as you now understand, analgesic drugs have the potential to cause adverse side effects, some of which might be mild but many are obviously not. In effect, every time you pop an aspirin or a paracetamol into your mouth, you are taking a risk and whilst there is no point in pretending that it is a major risk, it is nevertheless a chance that you are taking.

Rather than popping a pill when you're suffering a short-term pain, try some of the herbs detailed in the last chapter or do something like going out for a long walk in the fresh air. Whilst this is not a particularly revolutionary painkilling theory, it is a fact that a long walk will often clear a tense headache, whilst muscle pain can often be relieved by getting those muscles moving once again.



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Of course, if you suffer from chronic pain, then the solution that you are seeking is far more long term and permanent as well.

For this reason, some of the natural pain management strategies that you have read of in this report such as acupuncture or hypnosis must be worth considering. Even though it is understandable that the concept of having long needles pushed into your body may be slightly disconcerting, you have to balance your discomfort at the idea against the pain you're feeling.

Whatever kind of pain you suffer from, it is possible to bring that pain under control by applying the natural pain management techniques that you have read of in this manual.

By doing so, you may be able to reduce or even stop taking potentially harmful analgesic drugs, which in itself will bring significant health benefits and lifestyle improvements.

It never really makes sense to take potentially harmful chemicals when perfectly valid natural alternatives exist. As you have read, there are quite a few effective natural pain management techniques, so it clearly makes sense to start using them sooner rather than later.