

New Treatments for Chronic Pain

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Chances are that most of the people reading this article have taken some kind of pain reliever at least once since reading last month's Tualatin Life. Some of you have been taking pain medications regularly for chronic pain. While people living with chronic pain will often try anything to find relief, many may not be aware of all of the good and effective options accessible to them.

It's easy not to know about all the possible methods of pain management when the majority of conventional doctor's office, urgent care or emergency room visits are completed with a prescription for a pain killer. Unfortunately, narcotics slow the digestive tract and may have other unwanted side effects such as somnolence or cognitive impairment. Even non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin, ibuprofen and acetaminophen, cause GI bleeding and are toxic to the liver and kidneys. As a naturopathic physician and acupuncturist, I feel very fortunate to have other techniques to apply to the problems of acute and chronic pain.

- There are numerous positive articles about the effect of acupuncture in alleviating pain and acupuncture is one of the main tools I utilize in helping patients overcome pain. Most patients report improvement very quickly

with acupuncture treatment, and I've been able to decrease pain using acupuncture that other techniques haven't been able to touch.

- The side effects of oral pain-relief drugs tend to be centered around the digestive organs and nervous system due to high concentrations in the intestines and blood stream. Using topical pain relieving agents allows us to deliver pain relief in a focused manner at the site of pain and eliminate the majority of side effects.
- Herbal, homeopathic and nutraceutical support can also ease symptoms of pain. Dr. Oz reported this month on the use of California poppy for pain relief, but this is just one herbal remedy that can help relieve pain. Other herbs, homeopathic remedies and nutrients can be used in a targeted manner to create muscle relaxation and pain relief.
- I often recommend patients consider an anti-inflammatory diet when they are suffering from chronic pain. Anti-inflammatory protocols, which include diet, specific high quality herbal preparations and topical applications and treatments, are very effective and often have positive side effects unrelated to pain such as decreased seasonal allergies and weight loss.
- With stubborn trigger points or muscular issues, I include massage therapy on my treatment plan and refer for a highly focused therapeutic massage utilizing hot stones for a deeper effect and sometimes followed by

Kinesio taping to help maintain and extend the effect of the treatment.

- When other issues need to be addressed through physical therapy or chiropractic care, I refer out to a network of trusted providers and find that my treatment techniques work well in conjunction with these other methods.
- As naturopathic physicians, providing primary care, we also are able to prescribe and manage oral pain relieving agents as well.

The techniques described in this article can be applied to many kinds and sources of pain, including back pain; headache; neck pain; degenerative disk disease; arthritis; pain from cancer; fibromyalgia; menstrual cramps; musculoskeletal pain such as sprain or strain all over the body; neurologic pain and other symptoms such as numbness, tingling or weakness; and pain and injury following a motor vehicle accident. If you are living with chronic pain or experiencing acute pain and would like to try a different approach, make an appointment for a consultation with one of the naturopathic doctors from True Health Medicine.



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