Surprising Ways to Treat Your Chronic Pain

by ERIN SCOTT

Options for Chronic Pain Treatment

Finding an effective plan for chronic pain treatment can be overwhelming. People are quick to give you advice about this supplement, that juice fast, or the amazing new superfood that will supposedly cure all that ails you.

Sometimes these treatment suggestions can be helpful, but it can be hard to figure out what is backed by science and what works for you.
If you have tried some of the more traditional pain relief methods, such as opioid painkillers, physiotherapy, surgery and injections, then here are some different and perhaps surprising ways to treat pain!

Mindfulness and Meditation

There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that various forms of meditation, such as mindfulness meditation, can help with chronic pain treatment.
Mindful.org describes mindfulness as: “the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we’re doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.”

In practice, it can be as simple as focusing solely on one’s breath, or on certain senses that you are experiencing. Slowing down and paying attention to the details of life has mental health benefits, and the practice re-trains how your brain perceives pain. These are all things that help with chronic pain.

Getting Back to Nature

Seeing green and looking at some trees might seem like an odd treatment for pain, but there is scientific evidence to support the fact that nature can be an effective approach to managing it. The theory is that your brain is preoccupied with pleasant stimuli, so it “forgets” to focus on the pain.

Studies, such as Spiegel et al’s August 2019 one (published in the journal PLOS ONE), tested patients using virtual reality googles. This allowed the patients to immerse themselves in an outdoor setting, helping to ease their pain. This suggests that nature, experienced through virtual reality (virtual reality google, video games, etc.), can help with your pain management if you struggle to get out of the house.

Medications

Medications are not exactly a surprising way to treat chronic pain. However, it might surprise you to learn that there are effective medicines for long-term pain management, that are not painkillers.

Opioids are often used for pain relief; however, your physician may want to prescribe a drug from another category of medications.

Antidepressants

Hearing that your doctor wants to put you on an antidepressant for your chronic pain can be jarring, especially if you haven't had any issues with depression. Don't worry! There are several antidepressant medications that, in low doses, can help with pain.

Antiepileptics

Antiepileptics are medications typically used to treat seizure and movement disorders. They have also been found to help with neuropathic pain and pain from fibromyalgia.

Cannabis/Cannabis Products

While not typically thought of as a "medicine," cannabis is gaining recognition as its medicinal uses are becoming better known. In many places, you may seek out a prescription for medical cannabis, and patients are using it as they would any other medication.

Cannabis can be taken in a variety of ways including smoking, vaping and even tinctures. Different types of products also ensure that you can get the desired effect; For example: help sleeping, pain relief, help relaxing, etc. Products with little to no tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and high in cannabidiol (CBD) can also provide benefits, without the psychoactive effects typically associated with cannabis.

However, you should note that cannabis is not for everyone and may not be a legal product in your area.

Therapy

There is a clear and established link between mental and physical health; one can affect the other. And who enjoys being stressed out and in pain?

Therapy can help you address any underlying issues that are causing you to feel anxious or depressed. Talking to someone about how you feel can be very powerful, and this overall improvement in emotional well-being will have a positive effect on your pain too.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) helps you address certain problems that can help your physical health (like sleep issues, diet and pain management strategies). Group therapy is useful to meet others going through similar things as you, share stories and get advice from your peers. After all, none of us are in this alone!

Biofeedback

According to the Mayo Clinic, biofeedback is "a technique you can use to learn to control some of your body's functions, such as your heart rate."

It is usually done by having you connected to sensors, such as an electroencephalograph (EEG) to monitor your brain waves, electrocardiograph (ECG) for your heart rate and/or electromyograph (EMG) to monitor muscle contractions. Then, using a device, you can play a game designed to help you deal with stress or meditate.

Through the sensors and device, you will get feedback on your stress levels. If they are too high, you can focus on relaxing, thinking positively, breathing deeply or whatever you need to do.
Biofeedback is not only great for your mental health, but it helps you connect to your body and consciously relax, leading to less pain!

Cold Laser Therapy

Cold laser therapy sounds intimidating, but the lasers that are used have very low light levels, and they don't

even heat your body’s tissue.

The laser is directed at the painful area, and it helps stimulate healing. Also, it doesn’t hurt and only takes a few minutes. A few studies, such as David et al. (2007), provide evidence that combining cold laser therapy with exercise, can also help with lower back pain.

There are all sorts of methods for chronic pain treatment. Some of them are more traditional, and some of them are quite surprising!
If you keep an open mind and give something new a try, hopefully pain relief will soon be on your way.