

## Coping With Chronic Pain

by Ashleigh Eisbrener

Chronic pain affects more Americans than diabetes, heart disease and cancer combined. An estimated 76 million people suffer from chronic pain, according to the National Centers for Health Statistics, and the condition affects more women than men. Chronic pain is pain or soreness in any part of the body, chronic stiffness and muscle tension and/or recurring internal pain that persists or progresses over a long period of time.

It can be related to but is not limited to a number of medical conditions, including diabetes, arthritis, migraines, fibromyalgia, cancer, sciatica and previous injury. Chronic pain brings a burden of depression, anxiety, frustration, fatigue, isolation and lowered

self-esteem and can interfere with every aspect of a person's life from work to relationships. Couples describe chronic pain as the third person in their marriage.

Chronic pain shouldn't control your life. It can be managed various ways depending on you and your type of pain. Check out the chart below to find the best treatment for you.



Type	What They Help	How They Work	Examples
Movement-Based Therapies: Physical Exercises and Practices	Musculoskeletal pain, joint pain and lower back pain	By strengthening the muscles, supporting joints, improving alignment and releasing endorphins.	<b>Physical therapy:</b> Specialized movements to strengthen weak areas <b>Yoga:</b> Meditative stretching and posing <b>Pilates:</b> Resistance regimen that strengthens the core <b>Tai Chi:</b> Improves balance
Nutritional and Herbal Remedies: Food Choices and Dietary Supplements	All chronic pain, especially abdominal discomfort, headaches and inflammatory conditions.	By boosting the body's natural immunity, reducing pain-causing inflammation, soothing pain and decreasing insomnia.	<b>Anti-Inflammatory Diet:</b> Mediterranean eating pattern high in whole grains, fruits, vegetables and fish <b>Omega-3 Fatty Acids:</b> Nutrients abundant in fish oil and flaxseed to reduce inflammation <b>Ginger:</b> A root inhibiting pain-causing molecules <b>Turmeric:</b> A spice that reduces inflammation <b>MSM:</b> A naturally occurring nutrient that helps build bone and cartilage
Mind-Body Medicine: Using the Powers of the Mind to Produce Changes in the Body	All types of chronic pain	By reducing stressful emotions, such as panic and fear and refocusing attention on subjects other than pain.	<b>Meditation:</b> Focuses the mind on something specific to quiet it <b>Guided Imagery:</b> Visualizing a goal to change your physical reality <b>Biofeedback:</b> Becoming alert to body processes through a machine <b>Relaxation:</b> Releasing tension in the body through exercises and controlled breathing
Energy Healing: Manipulating the Electrical Energy Emitted by the Body's Nervous System	Pain that lingers after injury heals, as well as pain complicated by trauma, anxiety or depression.	By relaxing the body and the mind, distracting the nervous system, producing natural painkillers and activating natural pleasure centers.	<b>Acupuncture:</b> Small needles that stimulate the flow of energy <b>Acupressure:</b> Finger pressure applied to points to increase the flow of energy <b>Chigong:</b> Slow physical movements that cleanse the body <b>Reiki:</b> Moving the hands over energy fields to increase energy flow
Physical Manipulation: Hands-On Massage or Movement of Painful Areas	Musculoskeletal pain, especially lower-back and neck pain; pain from muscle underuse or overuse; and pain from adhesion or scars	By restoring mobility, improving circulation, decreasing blood pressure and relieving stress.	<b>Massage:</b> Manipulation of tissue to relax knotted muscle, increase circulation and release tension <b>Chiropractic:</b> Moving vertebrae or joints into proper alignment <b>Osteopathy:</b> Realigning vertebrae, ribs and other joints
Lifestyle Changes: Developing Healthy Habits at Home and Work	All types of chronic pain	By strengthening the immune system, enhancing well-being and reframing your relationship to chronic pain	<b>Sleep Hygiene:</b> Creating an optimal sleep environment to get restorative rest <b>Healthy Relationships:</b> Nurturing honest and supportive friendships to ease anxiety <b>Exercise:</b> Regular activity to build strength and lower stress
Medical Practitioner	All types of chronic pain	By decreasing pain through the use of medicine.	<b>Acetaminophen:</b> Help relieve pain <b>Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory drugs:</b> Build up in the blood to levels that fight pain from inflammation <b>Narcotics:</b> Relieve pain if taken as directed