

Alternative Pain Relief: Hippie-Dippie Hype or Trustworthy Trend?

By Rachel Maier, MS



DO YOU suffer from aches and pains? According to the National Institutes of Health's Pain Consortium, 65 percent of U.S. adults over the age of 65 report suffering from pain, and up to 30 percent of older adults report suffering from chronic pain.¹ That's a lot of suffering!

Seeking relief from a pill bottle every time something hurts might ease the pain temporarily, but drug-based pain relievers can cause many other problems when taken inappropriately or too often. Over-the-counter medicines such as ibuprofen can cause gastrointestinal distress, kidney damage, stroke, ulcers and even heart attacks, among other ailments; and acetaminophen can cause liver problems. Prescription narcotics such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, among others, are safe when used appropriately, but can cause addiction, overdose and even death.

Drug-based pain relievers are one option for easing discomfort, but they

are not the *only* answer. Alternative therapies abound — but do they really work? After all, serious pain calls for serious relief.

What Is “Alternative Pain Relief” Anyway?

First, let's be clear about what alternative pain relief is *not*: a hyped up, hippie-dippie approach to pain management that doesn't really work. Instead, “alternative” refers to anything that can be used instead of mainstream, conventional drug-based options. These remedies often include acupuncture, chiropractic care, physical therapy, herbal remedies, massage, magnetic waves, biofeedback, meditation and more,² not to mention good old-fashioned warm compresses or ice packs.

Are Alternative Pain Relievers Natural?

If “natural” means “drug-free,” then yes, alternative pain relievers are natural. But, if “natural” means homemade salves made from things you can find in the forest, then no, alternative therapies are not necessarily “natural.”

True, there are plenty of natural pain-relieving properties in things such as Arnica montana plants and turmeric that have been used to ease inflammation and treat ailments without synthetic, chemically-derived drugs for generations, and our shopping guide highlights two products utilizing some of them. But more and more, alternative pain relief refers to drug-free therapies that use natural materials

combined with human effort and ingenuity (such as a microwaveable heating pad filled with dried corn kernels or devices that use electric currents to interact with the brain's pain signals).

High-Tech Help

In fact, high-tech pain relievers are booming. Gadgets programmed to interact with your body to relieve pain are some of the most popular alternatives today. Electromagnetic fields that moderate nerve activity and reduce the perception of pain by the human brain, transcutaneous electric nerve stimulation (TENS) and red light therapy are just three examples.

Trends Worth Trying

It might be intimidating to think about trying something so new (especially given the price tag!), but rest assured these new gadgets are designed to be safe and easy to use, and many come with a money-back guarantee, making them worth your while to try — especially if they really do provide the relief you need. See the shopping guide for details. 

References

1. National Institutes of Health Pain Consortium, Chronic Pain in Older Adults. Accessed at www.painconsortium.nih.gov/sites/default/files/documents/aging_and_chronic_pain_infographic_508.pdf.
2. Alternative Medicine — Pain Relief. MedlinePlus, reviewed Nov. 9, 2021. Accessed at medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002064.htm.



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Omron Total Power + Heat TENS Unit

The Omron Total Power + Heat TENS Unit is a powerful, drug-free device that relieves chronic,

acute and arthritic pain through the combination of soothing heat and TENS technology. TENS relieves pain with electrical pulses transmitted across the skin and alongside nerves, preventing the brain from receiving pain signals. The electrical stimulation also releases endorphins in the body that are a natural pain reliever.

\$94.50; omronhealthcare.com/products/total-power-heat-tens-unit-pm800

The Original Microwavable Corn Bag

Made with 100 percent breathable cotton fabric, along with all-natural, triple-cleaned and microwavable whole kernel corn, these weighted heat bags soothe and relax tight muscles, stimulate circulation and improve flexibility. Great for back pain, migraines, fibromyalgia, arthritis, lupus, diabetes, scleroderma, poor circulation and more!

Start at \$11.99; www.corn-bags.com



Shopping Guide for Alternative Pain Relief



Relief Factor

Relief Factor is a daily supplement meticulously formulated by doctors. It contains a powerful combination of four ingredients (turmeric, resveratrol, omega-3 and icariin) specifically balanced to help support certain pathways in the body that are associated with pain and inflammation. Taken over time, Relief Factor can reduce or even eliminate joint and muscle pain.

\$93.95 for a single purchase of a one-month supply, or \$79.95 per month for a subscription; www.reliefactor.com

Arnicare Gel

Made from a tincture of the fresh, whole Arnica montana plant, Arnicare gel temporarily relieves muscle pain and stiffness. And, this powerful gel also reduces swelling and discoloration from bruises.

Starts at \$8.99; www.boironusa.com/product/arnicare-gel



Novaa Light Pad — the Deep Healing Therapy

Recognized by the FDA as a medical device, the Novaa Deep Healing Pad delivers wavelengths that send healing energy into the injured cells of your body. Twenty minutes of healing light per day increases circulation and promotes the healing process. Ease pain in your back, knees and neck; reduce pain from arthritis; treat neuropathy and other chronic pain conditions; and heal faster after surgery. The Novaa Light Pad with remote control is pricey, but with a 60-day money back guarantee, it's definitely worth trying.

\$600; novaalab.com

Kailo Natural Pain Patch

Kailo is a non-invasive patch that's embedded with billions of tiny microcapacitors that work together to talk to your brain's electrical system to "turn down the volume" of the pain signal (like a "bio-antenna") to naturally relieve pain in seconds. Simply stick the 100 percent drug-free Kailo patch to your body wherever it hurts. Safe and effective, the patch can be worn every day!

Starts at \$119; gokailo.io

