

# Treating Pain without Pain Pills

Pain pills are usually needed to control severe pain. But some types of pain can be helped by other treatments or by medicines not usually used for pain. Here are some treatments that can help you manage your pain.

**Exercise** Regular physical activity keeps you healthy and helps your body function at its best. It can help control disease, improve mental health, and reduce the effects of aging on your body. An enjoyable and effective exercise program is an important part of your pain management.

**Psychological Techniques** It is very important for you to get a sense of control over your pain. Educate yourself in ways to cope with and control it. Self-help groups, counselors, and your doctors can help you learn how to build this sense of control.

Meditation, relaxation, prayer, and imagery, among others, are techniques that can give you a feeling of control. You can learn more about these techniques in books, on the internet, and through community programs that provide these services for those with pain.

A combination of psychological technique, exercise, and medication gives you an effective way to cope with your pain.

**Depression Treatment** Many people with pain also have depression. If you are depressed, treatment can help you feel and function better.

**Physical Treatments** Physical treatments, such as heat, cold, massage, chiropractic manipulation, and acupuncture, can ease some types of pain:

- Heat can loosen stiff joints and soothe painful muscles.
- Cold is good for reducing swelling and soreness from acute activity.

Discuss with your doctor these types of treatments and see what helps your pain.

*(Adapted with permission from the Practicing Physician Education Project 2006)*

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**Nerve Stimulation and Anesthetic** Stimulating or numbing the nerves to an area of the body with pain sometimes helps. Your doctor can prescribe a device called a TENS unit that electrically stimulates the nerves.

Nerve stimulants applied to the skin like capsaicin cream or a local anesthetic such as a lidocaine patch can sometimes work for pain.

**Other Medicines That Help Pain** Other medicines that aren't primarily used for pain can also help. Seizure medicines, heart rhythm medicines, and local anesthetics help some people with pain.

Your doctor can tell you if you should use one of these.

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