

# Safe, Natural Solutions for **CHRONIC PAIN**

Acute pain occurs when you are injured and this pain dissipates naturally as the injury heals. So once you are aware of the injury and have taken care of it, taking an analgesic (a pain-relieving medicine) to ease the pain while the injury heals makes sense.

But what happens when the pain doesn't dissipate, when it doesn't go away and the acute pain becomes chronic pain? It may be tempting to just keep taking analgesics to stop the pain, but taking them long-term isn't the solution. Chronic pain is an indication that there are still problems that need to be addressed.

In addition to ignoring the underlying problem, the long-term use of most OTC and prescription analgesics (i.e. aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and codeine) can have unwanted side effects. For example, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), the most commonly used analgesics for chronic pain, have several possible side effects. Studies have shown that they are a common cause of peptic ulcers, increased blood pressure, and can contribute to the progression of atherosclerosis. They may also increase the risk of having a heart attack or stroke, especially if you have pre-existing heart disease. NSAIDs and acetaminophen (another common analgesic) can also cause chronic kidney disease, kidney failure, and liver damage.

Even more problematic are narcotic analgesics, especially the various opioids, including morphine, heroin, codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone (sold as OxyContin), fentanyl and many others. These drugs are not only addictive, they are associated with gastrointestinal upset, depression of respiratory function, and even fatal overdose. This is an increasingly serious problem. About 65,000 people died from opioid overdose in 2021, up from about 47,000 people in 2018.

## **Failing to Address the Cause**

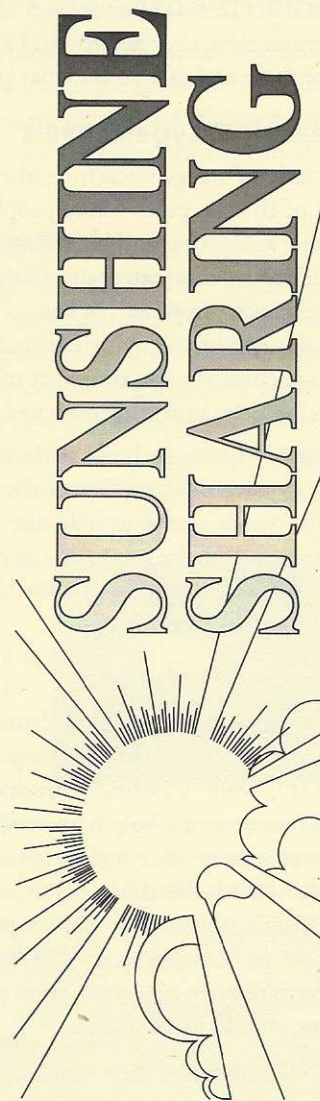
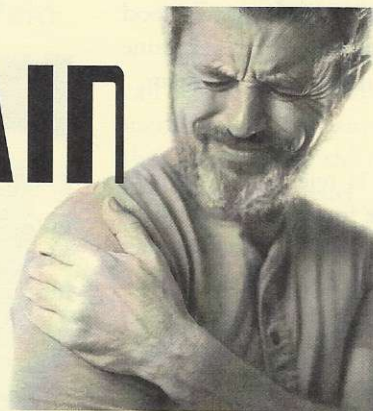
While these potential side effects are cause for concern, the biggest problem with pain medications is when they are used to mask the pain without doing anything to fix underlying problems. Analgesics have never cured anyone of ongoing frequent headaches or migraines, arthritic pain, fibromyalgia, or chronic back or neck pain. Relieving chronic pain without fixing the problem that is causing it means the problem will never go away and may become worse.

If you are suffering from chronic pain you are probably wondering what you can do, especially if you've been told that the cause of your chronic pain is incurable by modern medicine. Fortunately, in most cases, there are solutions that will help you heal the problems causing your pain and lead to lasting relief from chronic pain. That's what we'll explore in this issue of *Sunshine Sharing*. We'll look at common underlying causes of chronic pain and strategies you can use to correct them. We'll also identify some safe, and effective, herbs and supplements that can ease chronic pain that don't have the side effects associated with OTC and prescription analgesics. So, let's start by looking at underlying causes of chronic pain.

## **Identifying Underlying Causes of Chronic Pain**

Pain is a signal from the body that something is wrong, which means it is important to find a way to fix whatever is wrong. Just like acute pain dissipates as the injury heals, chronic pain will also dissipate if you can help the body to heal.

In traditional systems of medicine, pain is seen as a sign of stagnation, either of the body's fluids or energy. There is wisdom in this, as chronic pain typically involves a lack of blood and lymph flow to a previously damaged area of the body and a low level of energy that is preventing healing. When there is a lack of blood bringing oxygen to the tissues and a lack of good lymphatic drainage, the distressed cells send signals to the brain to bring attention to the problem. There are five primary underlying causes that may be contributing to chronic pain, and all of them are



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interrelated. They are low oxygen levels, dehydration, poor blood and lymph flow, over acidity, and a lack of energy. Let's examine each of these and talk about what can be done to correct them.

## Increasing Oxygen Levels

A lack of oxygen reaching the cells is one of the primary causes of chronic pain. Many people have found that something as simple as relaxing and breathing deeply for five or ten minutes will reduce or eliminate pain. Unfortunately, many people tend to do the exact opposite. When in pain they tense their muscles and hold their breath, which actually makes the pain worse. So, if you have chronic pain, try to get more oxygen into your body by practicing deep breathing exercises.

It also helps to use herbs and supplements that aid the blood's ability to carry oxygen. One of these supplements is liquid chlorophyll, which seems to help the blood carry more oxygen. If you're anemic, make sure you're getting the nutrients that help to increase the hemoglobin in your blood, including iron, vitamin C, vitamin B12, and folate.

## Improving Hydration

Another primary cause of chronic pain is dehydration. Dr. Batmangholidj, MD, while a political prisoner, found that he could help many of his fellow prisoners who had problems with pain, headaches, indigestion, and other health problems by encouraging them to drink more water. Water is needed to remove acid waste from the body so a lack of water will increase acidity in the tissues, which increases pain. (See *Alkalize the Body*.)



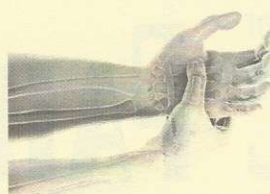
For example, many people who suffer from chronic headaches have found that the headaches stop when they drink more water. So, try increasing your water intake. Around 1/2 ounce of pure water per pound of body weight per day is a good goal. Also avoid dehydrating (and acidifying) beverages like soda pop, alcohol, and coffee. You may be pleasantly surprised at how much pain and discomfort this simple practice eliminates.

## Increasing Blood and Lymph Flow

Another way to decrease chronic pain and promote healing to injured tissues is to increase blood and lymph flow to a painful area of the body. This can be done by doing two simple things.

The first is applying herbs and/or essential oils in lotions, oils, or creams that draw blood and lymph to the painful areas. Remedies that do this include capsicum, ginger, kava kava, and essential oils like lavender, camphor, eucalyptus, nutmeg, clove, and menthol. Besides increasing blood flow, some of these remedies are also analgesic, so they reduce pain while they promote healing.

For example, capsaicin, found in capsicum, blocks pain signals because it mimics a neurotransmitter, substance P, which sends pain signals. Methyl salicylate, found in wintergreen, acts like a topical aspirin, and clove and nutmeg have compounds that reduce pain signals. So, regularly applying a *Topical Analgesic Formula* that contains a blend of the ingredients mentioned above will help



increase blood and lymph flow and reduce pain.

The second thing that improves blood and lymph flow is massage. So, while applying a *Topical Analgesic Formula*, massage the painful area until the pain subsides. This usually takes five to fifteen minutes. Massage drains away stagnant lymph fluid and draws fresh blood into the injured area. In fact, if you can make the pain go away with massage, you can probably get the area to heal completely by applying the following secret—don't wait until the pain returns to massage the area again.

If you massage the area frequently enough to keep the pain from returning, you're maintaining the flow of blood and lymph necessary to help the area heal. So, apply the topical analgesic and massage on a regular schedule that prevents the pain from returning. This will typically be about every two to four hours. If you continue this for a period of two or three weeks, you may find the pain starts to subside permanently, showing the area is actually healing. You can reduce the frequency and eventually eliminate the massage when this happens.

## Alkalize the Body

There is a relationship between pH, oxygen levels, energy levels, and pain. An alkaline substance has electrons to donate to chemical reactions, adding energy that aids healing. An acidic substance lacks electrons and wants to steal them, lowering the energy available for healing. Thus, the more acidic the tissues are, the less energy is available for healing, which contributes to chronic pain.

Foods rich in antioxidants alkalyze the body and have electrons to donate for healing. Fresh fruits and vegetables are loaded with antioxidants and help to alkalyze the body, promoting higher energy levels and more rapid healing. Anyone suffering from chronic pain should adopt a diet that is at least 60-70% fresh fruits and vegetables. Some people will temporarily go on a 100% fresh fruit and vegetable diet to eliminate pain and promote healing. If you're in chronic pain, it's definitely worth a try.

You can also take an *Antioxidant Formula*, containing ingredients like mangosteen, green tea extract, lycium, turmeric root, açai berry, and grape seed extract. This may further help to alkalyze the body and reduce chronic pain.

## Energize the Tissues

One theory of chronic pain is that there simply isn't enough energy in the tissues to allow them to heal properly. There are a number of ways you can bring more energy to the tissues, speed up the healing process, and reduce or eliminate the pain.

One of these is using a device that emits a small electrical current and apply this current to painful areas. This is a proven method of reducing pain and speeding healing. There are also special lasers that can add energy to speed tissue. Grounding, the technique of connecting your body to the energy of the earth, may also help.

If you suffer from chronic pain, do a little research or find someone who has such devices, and try them out. They can be very effective at both relieving pain and stimulating healing.

## Secondary Factors Causing Chronic Pain

Besides the five primary causes of chronic pain, there are several secondary factors to consider when working to eliminate chronic pain. These include muscle tension, chemical irritation, and mechanical irritation.

### Relax Muscle Tension

Muscle spasms are a common cause of chronic pain. Muscles become chronically tense from fatigue, brought on by stress, poor posture, or repetitive movements. For example, many people who work long hours at a computer or are constantly on their cell phone may get chronic tension in their upper back, neck and shoulders, which can lead to neck pain, back pain, and headaches.



If muscle tension is causing your pain, make sure you're getting enough rest and taking periodic breaks from repetitive tasks to stretch and relax. Adopting better posture while sitting or standing will also help. Bodywork, such as chiropractic adjustments or massage therapy, also helps ease this type of pain.

Magnesium helps ease cramping, so try taking about 400 to 800 milligrams of magnesium daily. Kava kava taken internally and lobelia extract applied topically, will also help reduce pain caused by muscle tension.

### Detoxifying to Remove Chemical Irritation

Various environmental toxins can irritate the nerves and contribute to chronic pain. These include petrochemicals (e.g. gasoline, solvents) and heavy metals (e.g. mercury and lead). This is why doing a cleanse will sometimes help to ease chronic pain.

A particularly good cleanse for this is the *Chinese Balanced Cleansing Program*. It contains a *Chinese Wood Reducing Formula* that helps to decongest the liver and aid liver detoxification and a *Special Cellular Detoxification Formula* that helps remove waste via the liver, kidneys, and lymphatics.

Another good option is a *Hepatoprotective Formula*, which contains milk thistle seed, dandelion root, turmeric, and N-acetyl cysteine. Anyone who has chronic pain and works around any type of chemicals, including hair dressers, dry cleaners, carpet cleaners, painters, mechanics, or lab workers should consider taking this formula to help remove toxins from their body and reduce the irritation to their nerves from the chemicals to which they are exposed.

### Removing Mechanical Irritation

Mechanical irritation can also cause pain signals. For instance, carpal tunnel syndrome is an irritation to the nerves into the hands from mechanical problems with the wrists. TMJ, a tension in the jaw, can cause pain in the face. Injuries to the spine can cause irritation to the nerves coming out of the backbone, which can cause pain and other symptoms in various parts of the body, something recognized by chiropractors.

Where this is the case, the body needs mechanical work to ease pain. This may involve improving posture, getting some type of body work such as massage therapy or chiropractic care.

## Supplements to Ease Chronic Pain

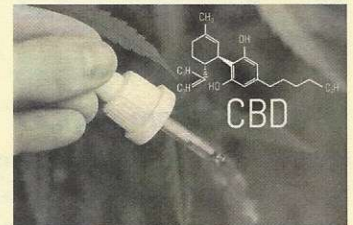
There are a variety of nutritional supplements and herbs that can help to ease chronic pain without the side effects of the drugs used to ease pain. Many of these supplements don't just mask pain, they actually help the damaged tissues heal, which can result in permanent pain relief.

### Omega-3 Essential Fatty Acids

Most modern diets are high in omega-6 fatty acids, but deficient in omega-3 fatty acids. Many researchers have found that the high ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids is pro-inflammatory. You can decrease this ratio by consuming a fish oil supplement rich in omega-3 essential fatty acids. This has helped reduce levels of chronic pain for many people. It also helps to avoid bad fats (margarine, shortening and processed vegetable oils) and refined carbohydrates, which are also pro-inflammatory.

### CBD

A supplement that has become increasingly popular for easing chronic pain is CBD, a phytocannabinoid found in hemp. CBD is a non-addictive pain reliever that can help with



many types of severe or chronic pain. It works by helping to regulate a recently discovered system in the body, the endocannabinoid

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## Nature's Aspirin

For thousands of years on different continents, people have used willow bark to ease chronic pain. In 1838, a compound called salicylic acid was isolated from willow bark and found to reduce inflammation, ease pain (especially pain associated with arthritis or headaches), and bring down fever. This led to the creation of aspirin, an acetylated form of salicylic acid, *acetylsalicylic acid*.

In addition to willow bark, there are many herbs which contain salicylates. These include meadowsweet, black cohosh, clove buds, poplar leaves and buds, quaking aspen buds and bark, and wintergreen. All have many of the same analgesic and anti-inflammatory actions of aspirin, and have a lower tendency to side effects such as over thinning the blood or irritating the stomach lining.

The best ways to use these aspirin alternatives is to combine them with nervine herbs that relax muscle spasms and anti-inflammation herbs that promote healing. For example, an *Analgesic Nerve Formula* contains willow bark and black cohosh, which have salicylates, combined with the nervines hops, valerian, and wood betony. It also has the anti-inflammatory herb devil's claw. This is a good formula for many types of chronic pain associated with muscle tension and inflammation.

Another option is a *Herbal Arthritis Formula*, which contains willow bark and the anti-inflammatory herb yucca, combined with herbs to provide nutrients to help repair and heal joints such as alfalfa, horsetail, and sarsaparilla. Many people have found this blend helpful for arthritic and muscle pain.

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system (ECS). The ECS system modulates nerve transmissions and immune reactions. This includes both the inflammatory processes and the nerve impulses that transmit pain signals. The ECS helps to down regulate pain signals once the message has been delivered that the body is damaged. It also down regulates the inflammatory responses to allow healing.

It is now believed that many people who are experiencing pain and chronic inflammation have a poorly functioning ECS. Part of this may be due to a lack of omega-3 essential fatty acids. They are needed both to make the body's internal cannabinoids and also to make cannabinoid receptors. Taking CBD helps increase the effectiveness of the body's endocannabinoid receptors, which helps down regulate pain signals and the chronic inflammation associated with them. CBD does not build tolerance, so there do not appear to be any withdrawal symptoms when discontinuing it.

### **Alternatives to NSAIDs**

There are a number of herbs that have compounds that act to reduce pain and irritation via similar mechanisms to NSAIDs. The advantage of using these herbs is two-fold. First, they tend to be safer, with fewer side effects, and secondly, they often actually help to heal the tissue damage that is causing the pain signals to be sent, thus helping to relieve the cause and not just mask the symptoms.

Turmeric and one of its main constituents, curcumin, can be an effective alternative to NSAIDs. Research has shown that both turmeric and curcumin reduce chronic pain and inflammation as well as NSAIDs and while providing numerous other health benefits, such as reducing thrombosis, aiding digestion, and protecting the liver from toxic chemicals.

You can also use turmeric as part of an *Anti-Inflammatory Pain Formula*, which also contains willow bark extract (see *Nature's Aspirin* on page 3), boswellia, mangosteen pericarp, and andrographis for rapid, effective pain relief. In addition to being used for chronic pain, it can also be used following surgery or injury as an alternative to analgesic drugs. A good way to use this formula to

speed healing and relieve pain from injury or surgery is to take 2-4 capsules every 2-4 hours until the pain subsides, then reduce the dose to 2 capsules three times a day.

### **Alternatives to Corticosteroids and Opioids**

The adrenal glands produce a hormone called cortisol, which dampens inflammation and relieves pain. Cortisol is a stress hormone and is released during stressful circumstances to inhibit pain so one can deal with traumatic situations. This is why you don't always feel pain immediately after being injured.

Corticosteroid drugs are synthetic mimics of cortisol and are used for a wide variety of conditions involving chronic pain and inflammation, including arthritis, asthma, autoimmune disorders and severe injuries. These drugs often have very serious side effects because they are mimics of a stress hormone and cause some of the same effects, which include depression of the immune system.

Licorice root, wild yam, and yucca have a cortisol-like action in reducing chronic inflammation and pain, without these side effects. They can be used to help wean people off of corticosteroids or can be used as alternatives to corticosteroids. Fairly large doses need to be taken, 2-3 capsules three or four times daily.

Natural remedies that can be used in place of opioids, or to help wean people off of opioids, include CBD, corydalis, and California poppy. However, never abruptly discontinue pain medications as this can cause rebound reactions. Instead, start using natural alternatives and slowly back off the doses of medications, preferably with the help of a professional herbalist, naturopath, or holistic MD.

### **Additional Help and Information**

This is just a start to the many options for dealing with chronic pain naturally. For more information about safe and effective relief of chronic pain, contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

*Strategies for Health* by Steven Horne

*Reversing Chronic Pain* by Maggie Phillips

*Your Body's Many Cries for Water* by Fereydoon Batmanghelidj