

Drug-free ways to beat pain!

By Michelle Nightingale

Headaches, joint pain and backache – we all get these niggling aches and pains from time to time and research shows that more than a third of us automatically reach for conventional painkillers. Almost 10 million Brits suffer daily pain that impacts on their quality of life, so learning to manage yours could provide welcome relief.

You might think that you cope far better with painful niggles than your partner, but studies actually show that women are more sensitive to pain, particularly during the menopause when oestrogen levels are low. If pain is stopping you from living your life read on for complementary therapies that could help...

ACUPUNCTURE

Best for: Everything from back pain to arthritis

If you experience chronic lower back pain acupuncture is worth a try. A recent study found that 60 per cent of people saw a reduction in pain after just eight weeks, while just 39 per cent of people using conventional treatments felt

a difference. “Acupuncture involves having extremely fine needles inserted into your skin, with the aim of treating not just the pain, but also the underlying cause,” explains British Acupuncture Council member Maggie Bavington. “It can be very effective for problems such as back pain, painful arthritic joints and even IBS. Sometimes symptoms go completely, but more commonly the condition can be alleviated with ongoing treatment.”

❖ **To find a practitioner** call the British Acupuncture Council on 0208 735 0400 or visit www.acupuncture.org.uk

Pain getting you down? Don't just grin and bear it – follow our guide to

alternative ways to get pain-free



HEAT THERAPY

Best for: Reducing stiffness and inflammation

Heat applied to aching muscles can ease your symptoms. Heat increases deep tissue temperature and blood flow to your muscles, which brings essential oxygen and nutrients to help repair damaged tissue. “Heat is comforting because it helps relax muscle tension and it also improves circulation to your joints to relieve stiffness and inflammation,” explains Barrie Savory, author of *The Good Back Guide*. Try ThermoCare self-heating wraps, which could help all sorts of pain, from muscular and joint twinges to conditions such as arthritis.

❖ **Stocked in Boots nationwide, for more information** call 0845 111 0151 or visit www.thermacare.co.uk



ThermoCare HeatWraps, £5.86 for two wraps

Always check with your doctor before trying any alternative treatments and never stop taking medication unless advised by your GP.



PILATES

Best for: Gently easing joint pain

Practising Pilates could help ease away any aches and pains, especially those that are due to a misalignment of your joints, which over time leads to extra wear and tear. Liz Chandler, a qualified Pilates teacher says: "Pilates follows a series of simple, controlled standing and floor exercises that are low impact and



put little stress on your body making it suitable if you suffer from arthritis, spinal problems or have had a hip replacement."

❖ For qualified Pilates teachers in your area visit www.pilatesfoundation.com

Real People Pilates For Over 50s is available to **Yours** readers for the special price of

£10 including p&p.

To order call 01373

455674 quoting

Yours magazine.

EXTRA FOR YOU



EXERCISE

Best for: Relieving tension and the 'feel-good' factor

"Movement itself can be pain relieving and it's also a great way of distracting your brain away from your aches," says Richmond Stace, a specialist pain physiotherapist. Plus the rush of endorphins after a workout could help to relieve tension and even make you feel happier. "Try to do five 30 minute sessions of moderate exercise a week to maintain good health and joints. Walking, swimming and cycling are all great options."

TENS MACHINES

Best for: Relieving chronic and acute pain

Using a TENS machine can help bring pain relief. Richmond Stace says: "They work by blocking the danger signals that tell your brain to create pain. When used in the correct way TENS machines can reduce pain caused by conditions such as arthritis, back pain, muscle pain and fibromyalgia."

❖ For more details call 01372 723434 or visit www.tenscare.co.uk

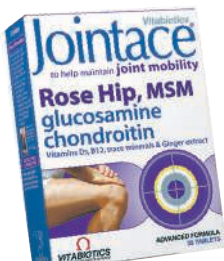
An itouch TENS machine, £46.99



SUPPLEMENTS

Best for: Maintaining joint mobility

There are hundreds of supplements available for aches and pains – but some are more beneficial than others. Studies have shown that glucosamine supplements could help to ease joint pain and may be even more effective long term than taking ibuprofen. Look for supplements that combine Glucosamine and rosehip, known for its anti-inflammatory properties. Remember, relief won't be instant and it may take up to three months before you see results.



Jointace to help maintain joint mobility, £12.95/30 tablets

Ask Dr Jonty

The Yours doctor is here to answer your questions every fortnight



Q My mum has just had a stroke. Seeing how much it has affected her life has really thrown me. Are strokes hereditary? And what can I do to prevent one?

DR JONTY SAYS: It's natural to worry about your own health when someone close to you is ill – and the fact that your mum has had a stroke does unfortunately mean that you are at an increased risk of a stroke in the future yourself. A stroke is due to the blood supply to a part of your brain being interrupted, either through arteries becoming blocked or leaking. Without oxygen-rich blood, the cells of your brain begin to die, causing damage that leads to the physical symptoms we all associate with a stroke. There are a few things you can do to lower your risk. Keep an eye on your blood pressure and, if you're on any blood pressure medication, take it regularly.

'A small amount of alcohol won't do you any harm'

Regular exercise, keeping a healthy body weight and lowering your salt intake will also help. Protect your arteries by not smoking, eat less fatty food and more fruit and vegetables. Omega 3-rich oily fish, and foods containing soy products or plant sterols and stanols (such as Benecol) will also help keep your cholesterol down.

A small amount of alcohol will not do you any harm, but heavy alcohol consumption will increase your risk of a stroke. Your mum may also be on medication such as aspirin to thin her blood and prevent further strokes. But given current evidence I would not support you taking aspirin. If you do think you're having a stroke the sooner you can get treatment the better, so call a doctor immediately, but I hope you never need to.

Dr Jonty Heaversedge is a GP and star of BBC1's Street Doctor. He answers your health questions every fortnight.