

Healthy Living

6 DRUG-FREE WAYS TO EASE THE PAIN



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Pain from osteoarthritis can be debilitating. These strategies can help ease the suffering.

TRY ACUPUNCTURE.

Using needles to stimulate specific points on the body, acupuncture may release pain-killing endorphins and inflammation-taming chemicals. Recent research found that patients who received 23 treatments over six months experienced less joint pain than those who did not. Go to the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine website at ncaom.org - Appointments for this service can be made with Dr. Schaaf through the Curlew Medical Clinic @ (509) 779-4049.

MEDITATE

Practice slow deep breathing or visualization exercises to help ease your mind and reduce discomfort, suggests Vijay Vad, M.D., author of *Arthritis Rx*. You can rake a formal meditation class, where you sit and focus for 20-30 minutes every day, or you could simply sit still with your eyes closed for five minutes in a calm, quiet place.

TREAT DEPRESSION

If chronic pain keeps you from doing the things you love, you may be at risk for depression, which, in turn, can increase your pain. If you experience any symptoms (lack of energy, feelings of hopelessness, weight gain or loss, increased inactivity or isolation), seek help from a mental health professional. Visit the American Psychological Association website at apa.org

GET A MASSAGE

Massage might help arthritis by increasing blood flow to the joints. In a small trial at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, people with knee OA who got 12 sessions of Swedish massage had less stiffness and improved range of motion with benefits persisting for eight weeks after treatment ended. To find a massage therapist, visit the website of the American Massage Association at amtamassage.org

PRACTICE TAI CHI

Tai Chi's slow movements might help restore balance and strengthen muscles without stressing joints. A recent review of 12 studies shows that tai chi can help control OA knee pain. Practice for one hour, twice a week.

DO CONTRAST HYDROTHERAPY

Submerge an achy joint, like a hand or foot, in a basin of hot water for three minutes then switch to cold for 30 seconds. Repeat this hot-cold sequence two more times, says Bastyr University's Dean Neary, Ph.D. (Use moistened towels for knee or neck pain.) Heat increases blood flow to the joint, while cold moves it away, so alternating the temperature creates the equivalent of a pump that nourishes and lubricates the joint.



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