

# NONPHARMACOLOGICAL THERAPIES TO TREAT PAIN

## What are nonpharmacological therapies for pain?

Nonpharmacological therapies are ways to decrease pain using non-medicinal approaches. Here are some examples of ways you can help manage your pain at home along with prescribed pain medications or as treatments on their own. Each person may respond to these therapies differently. Many of these techniques are easily performed at home for little to no cost.

- **Heat:** helps decrease pain and muscle spasms. Apply heat to the area for 20 minutes every 2 hours as directed by your doctor. Use caution if sensation in the affected area is not normal such as in patients with neuropathy from diabetes, patients with poor circulation or spinal cord injuries as too much heat or heat for a prolonged period of time may cause burns.
- **Ice:** helps decrease swelling, muscle tension and spasm. Use an ice pack or put crushed ice in a plastic bag. Cover it with a towel and place it on the area for 15 to 30 minutes every hour as directed.
- **Massage therapy:** helps relax tight muscles, decrease pain, and provide an overall way to decrease stress.
- **Physical therapy:** may improve movement, strength, and decrease pain.
- **Aromatherapy:** is the use of natural oils, extracts, and fragrances to relax, decrease stress, and reduce pain. For example, peppermint oil has been used to treat neuropathy and inflammation.
- **Guided imagery:** involves the use of mental visualization to divert your attention away from pain. It may help you learn how to change the way your body senses and responds to pain.
- **Laughter:** helps decrease stress, anger, fear, depression, and hopelessness.
- **Music:** may release natural chemicals in your body increasing energy levels, improving mood, and reducing pain.
- **Biofeedback:** teaches your body to respond differently to the stress of being in pain.
- **Self-hypnosis:** directs your attention to something other than your pain. For example, you might repeat a positive statement about ignoring the pain or seeing the pain in a positive way.
- **Acupuncture:** uses very thin needles to balance energy channels in the body. This is thought to help reduce pain and other symptoms.



For more information: **National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NIH)**

web Address: <http://nccam.nih.gov>



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