

# For pain relief, why not try drug-free alternatives

October 2 2018, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter

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(HealthDay)—Pain sends more people to the doctor than any other ailment. But if you don't want relief from a medicine bottle—or when that relief isn't enough—consider complementary and integrative health approaches for their emotional as well as physical benefits.

Though certain types of movement can feel painful, especially if you're in the midst of an osteoarthritis or [rheumatoid arthritis](#) flare, some exercise disciplines are actually soothing.

Popular movement-based therapies include:

- Yoga, the ancient Indian practice, combines breathing, meditation and stretching.
- Pilates uses a variety of exercises—some done on a mat, others using equipment—to strengthen muscles in the body's core.
- Feldenkrais is an approach based on efficiency of movement to make everyday movements easier.
- Tai chi is the Chinese practice that uses a set series of flowing postures and has shown promise for arthritis, fibromyalgia and tension headaches, among other conditions.

Most types of exercise, even walking, release feel-good chemicals called endorphins. A physical therapist can create a workout program tailored to your needs and abilities.

You might find that a mind-body [therapy](#) is effective for you:

- Biofeedback teaches you how to control heart rate, blood pressure and [muscle tension](#) to possibly reduce pain.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy shows you how to change your reaction to pain.
- Guided imagery, distraction and hypnosis are all designed to shift your focus from your pain to pleasurable things.

Finally, hands-on approaches like massage therapy and acupuncture, with its thin needles that stimulate specific points on the body, are other options that may lessen your [pain](#).

Keep in mind that not every therapy is right for everyone or every condition. Take a trial-and-error approach, keep an open mind, and be patient as you explore each one.

**More information:** The U.S. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health has an e-book on many [complementary approaches](#) to pain relief.

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