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## Your Top 5 Pain Problems, Solved

Get relief from your most common body aches including back pain, arthritis, headaches, and more with these natural remedies

Holly Cassandra Corbett, Prevention

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### Prevention

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Unless you are one of the 30 or so people in the world who has a genetic quirk that keeps you from sensing pain, you know what it's like to feel discomfort. Your pain might be sharp and shooting or more like a constant throbbing. Though everyone experiences pain differently, there are certain parts of your body that are especially prone to aches. "The back, neck, shoulders, knees, joints, and head are all common areas where people experience pain," says Daniel Cherkin, PhD, senior scientific investigator with the Group Health Research Institute. Women may be harder hit: Some research shows women are more susceptible to pain, especially right before their periods when estrogen levels drop.

Drugs can help, but they're by no means a complete solution. "Most studies find that medications offer only a 20 to 30% reduction in pain," says Andrew Bertagnoli, PhD, a psychologist with the Spine Care Medical Group and a member of the board of directors for the American Chronic Pain Association. Check out these natural remedies for relief targeted at the areas where you need it most.

#### What's Behind Your Back Pain?

Whether you have a stiff neck, lower back ache, or shoulder pain, the first step of pain management is understanding the cause.

#### Pain Hotspot #1: Lower Back

Back pain strikes about 36 million Americans. Whether you've hurt yourself lifting a heavy box or have a chronic condition such as arthritis, back pain can interfere with everything from your job to your sex life. Getting it under control can improve your productivity as well as your relationships.

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ENBREL is a medicine that affects your immune system. ENBREL can lower the ability of your immune system to fight infections. Serious infections have happened in patients taking ENBREL. These infections include tuberculosis (TB) and infections caused by viruses, fungi, or bacteria that have spread throughout the body. Some patients have died from these infections. Your doctor should test you for TB before, during, and after ENBREL treatment, even if you have tested negative for TB.

There have been some cases of unusual cancers reported in children and teenage patients who started using tumor necrosis factor (TNF) blockers before 13 years of age. Also, for children, teenagers, and adults taking TNF blockers, including ENBREL, the chances of getting lymphoma or other cancers may increase. Patients with RA or psoriasis may be more likely to get lymphoma.

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 Date: 12/1/2010 Duration: 00:1:05 Video By: Men's Health  
 Try these moves to ease lower back pain now, from Men's Health magazine.

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### Ease Your Aches: Find a healing touch.

New research shows that massage therapy may be more effective than commonly used treatments such as drugs for short-term relief from soreness in your lower back, according to the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. After 10 weeks, study participants who received either a 1-hour relaxing Swedish massage or a form of massage focused on treating the tissues of the back were twice as likely to have spent fewer days in bed, taken fewer meds, and continued everyday activities (think: walking up stairs or having sex) compared with those who got usual care, such as painkillers, anti-inflammatory drugs, or muscle relaxants. Moreover, benefits lasted more than 6 months. "This study showed that massage is not only helpful in relieving lower-back pain, but you can get the same benefits with the more commonly available relaxing massage as you can with a more targeted massage," says lead study author Dr. Cherkin.

Experts aren't sure how massage works exactly to relieve back pain, but one theory might be that spending an hour being touched in a relaxing environment calms the central nervous system to lessen the perception of pain. To find a trained massage therapist near you, check out the American Massage Therapy Association. Massage may not be covered by your insurance even for medical reasons, but an affordable option is to find a teaching school near you. Relaxing massages can cost only \$35 for 50 minutes, and students are under the guidance of a licensed massage therapist.

### Pain Hotspot #2: Knees

You may not think much about your knees until you feel shooting pain while walking up stairs or throbbing after being on the go all day. While there are many reasons for knee pain, a common trigger is plain old wear and tear from arthritis. Being overweight puts added pressure on your knees, so losing pounds can help.

### Say Good-bye To Knee Pain

Reduce knee pain and inflammation with these yoga tips:

### Ease Your Aches: Keep moving.

Though it may seem counterintuitive, doing regular exercise such as walking can actually help soothe the pain because it strengthens muscles and tendons that support the joint and improves blood flow to the area for faster healing. "If you avoid walking because your knee hurts, then you'll lessen your range of motion so it'll hurt even more later on," says Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, author of the new book *Real Cause, Real Cure* (Rodale, 2011). "Try using a heating pad on your knees for 10 minutes before walking to help muscles relax so you'll get a better range of motion as well as pain relief." If you find walking too uncomfortable, another good option is swimming because it doesn't put as much pressure on your knees. In fact, people with arthritis in their knees or hips who did water exercises for 6 weeks reported less joint pain and better overall quality of life, according to the journal *Physical Therapy*.

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### Pain Hotspot #3: Joints

Red, swollen joints not only hurt, but can also keep you from doing the things you love. Arthritis is the top chronic-pain trigger in the United States. This joint inflammation can be caused by wear and tear (osteoarthritis), or by an autoimmune disease that affects mostly women (rheumatoid arthritis).

Ease Your Aches: Take your vitamins. Pills can offer some relief, but it's best to

go for the natural kind. "The most common pain relief prescribed for arthritis is nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs, that kill an estimated 16,500 Americans every year from bleeding ulcers," says Dr. Teitelbaum. To ease aches naturally, Dr. Teitelbaum suggests trying a combination of two cartilage-building nutrients known as glucosamine sulfate and methylsulfonylmethane, or MSM. Taking 750 milligrams of glucosamine sulfate two times a day for at least 6 weeks relieves pain and heals joints by building up the cartilage that protects the ends of bones so they don't run together. For optimum results, take with 400 milligrams of MSM three times a day, which may slash inflammatory chemicals called cytokines linked with arthritis pain. A study found that people taking MSM daily for 6 weeks experienced 80% less pain, and another study found that taking the two nutrients together worked best to relieve pain and inflammation.

### Pain Hotspot #4: Shoulders

Your shoulder is a ball and socket surrounded by ligaments and tendons, and has a broader range of motion than any other joint in your body. "It's especially prone to pain because there's an added strain on a joint that can move in so many different directions," says Irving Raphael, MD, sports medicine specialist at Raphael Sports Medicine and team physician at Syracuse University. Whether you've strained your shoulder from overuse while digging in the garden or from reaching for something

overhead, that shooting pain or throbbing sensation can be excruciating.

**Ease Your Aches:** Stretch yourself.

"If your shoulder is aching from overuse, some mild stretching may help relax the tightness in those muscles to relieve some of the soreness," says Dr. Raphael. The easiest way to stretch your shoulders is to stand 2 to 3 feet from the corner of a room, and raise your arms out next to you shoulder height, one palm pressing against each wall. Lean into the corner with your head dropped so that your shoulders get stretched back behind you. Hold the stretch for a count of five, relax for a count of five, and repeat five times. To stretch more of your shoulder muscles, you can repeat with your arms repositioned at waist level as well as above your head. This helps stretch your shoulder girdle muscles from the front as well as improves posture, which may also help shoulder pain.

**Tell us on Facebook: What pain relief techniques work for you?**

#### **Pain Hotspot #5: Head and Neck**

About 45 million Americans get regular headaches, and more than 75% of all headaches are tension headaches. That pounding may not be all in your head: The main culprit is linked to a tightening of the muscles in your neck that turn your head from side to side or with the muscles at the base of your neck, says Dr. Teitelbaum.

**Ease Your Aches:** Just breathe.

Stress can signal the body to release adrenaline, which can cause shallow breathing and those neck muscles to tighten that result in headaches, says Dr. Teitelbaum. Putting a hot compress on your neck muscles relaxes them to help relieve your headache. Practicing relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, can also help signal your body to release less adrenaline and alleviate tense muscles. The next time you feel a tension headache coming on, mindfully slow your breathing by inhaling for a count of four. Then exhale for a count of four as you focus on a word, such as peace, to help distract yourself from your worries. Repeat for about a minute to feel calmer.



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