

COMPLIMENTS OF

V theVitaminShoppe®

AMAZING wellness

herbs to the rescue!

12 AMAZING
HEALING
BOTANICALS

protein guide
for **VEGAN**
ATHLETES

3 STEP EASY
DETOX PLAN

BEST
NATURAL
"SMART"
DRUGS

trending
now! **HOLY
BASIL**

SPRING 2017

\$4.99



+ fresh, seasonal,
sweet & savory
SPRING SALADS!



NATURAL TREATMENT FOR PAIN

Q: I'm on a strong prescription drug for chronic pain. Is there a better way to treat it? —Taryn Johnson, Ft. Worth, TX

A: Theologian and physician Albert Schweitzer once said, "Pain is a more terrible lord of mankind than even death itself."

Pain affects *everything*, including your ability to work, which affects your ability to maintain health insurance, which affects your economic security. It also affects your stress levels, your sleep, and even your weight. A 2006 survey for the American Pain Foundation found that pain affected concentration, energy level, and overall enjoyment of life. More than 75 percent of patients surveyed reported feeling depressed. And 86 percent reported an inability

to sleep well, which, we know from voluminous research, can impact everything from hormonal health to obesity.

While most of us are familiar with acute pain—a normal sensation that alerts you to a potential injury—chronic pain is a whole different animal. Chronic pain persists for weeks, months, or even years. A National Institutes of Health survey found that the most common type of pain is lower-back pain, followed by neck pain and severe headaches or migraines. Chronic pain affects approximately 100 million people—more than diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and stroke combined. It's a prob-

lem that costs society somewhere between \$560 and \$635 billion a year, which comes out to about \$2,000 for every single person living in the U.S.

"In 2010, enough painkillers were prescribed to medicate every American adult every four hours for a full month," says Holly Lucille, RD, ND. Indeed, pain drugs are the second-largest pharmaceutical class globally, after cancer medications.

"Two hundred and fifty million prescriptions for opioids are written every year," says Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. "Enough for every adult in America to have a bottle of pills—and then some."

The dangers of opioids, however, are enormous. The country is currently experiencing an epidemic of heroin use—and 75 percent of heroin addicts started with prescription opioids before turning to heroin. These drugs are powerful and addictive and frequently fatal, particularly when combined with alcohol. And even when they're not fatal, they can cause considerable damage.

Even OTC painkillers can do damage. Take Tylenol, for example (acetaminophen). "Acetaminophen is the number one cause of acute liver failure in the U.S.," says Lucille. Pain killers like ibuprofen and aspirin are also problematic. "There are 32,500 deaths a year from the use of NSAIDs, with 16,500 of them being from ibuprofen alone," says Lucille.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Conventional medicine doesn't have an awful lot to offer those who suffer from chronic pain, other than these potentially dangerous pharmaceuticals. Fortunately, there are other options.

"Naturopathic doctors seek to identify and treat the cause of pain—in doing so, they use the least invasive methods to diagnose and treat," says Lucille. "Besides diet and lifestyle interventions, there are clinically studied, effective botanical medicines like turmeric, comfrey, and ginger that get the job done."

"Our research has shown that if you give the body what it needs, the pain routinely goes away," says Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, author of *Pain 1-2-3*. "Pain responds best to an integrative approach which includes not only medication, but nutrition, physical therapy, herbs like turmeric and its active ingredient curcumin, manual therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, chiropractic, and acupuncture."

One doctor who argues passionately for that integrative approach is Joe Tatta, DPT, CNS, author of the new book, *Heal Your Pain Now: The Revolutionary Program to Reset Your Brain and Body for a Pain-Free Life*. Tatta is a doctor of physical therapy, a board-certified nutrition specialist, and a functional medicine practitioner who specializes in treating persistent pain and lifestyle-related metabolic and autoimmune health issues. Not surprisingly, he takes an integrative and holistic approach to pain and



did you know...
Clinically studied, effective botanical medicines for pain include turmeric, comfrey, and ginger.

pain management, and opioids are not at the top of his list of go-to interventions. "Opioids don't work for chronic pain," says Tatta. "There are no good studies showing that opioids improve function—like walking, lifting groceries out of the car, playing with your grandkids, that kind of thing."

FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE

Enter the functional medicine approach to pain. Functional medicine looks at how the body functions—how all systems work together. And that includes the experience of pain.

The conventional, pharmaceutically based practice of medicine is highly specialized—you see a gastroenterologist for digestive problems, a prostate guy for your prostate, a psychiatrist for your depression, a cardiologist for your heart. But doctors trained in functional medicine don't look at each individual system in the body as if it functioned in a vacuum—instead, it takes a whole-body, integrative

approach and looks at how all these systems work together to create health (or disease).

"Remember, pain is a sensory and emotional experience," says Tatta. "This emotional component is crucial—what are my thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and how do they contribute to my pain experience?"

You don't often see diet addressed in most pain management programs, but it's a central part of Tatta's plan (as it is of Lucille's, Teitelbaum's, and virtually every other doctor who treats pain with a functional medicine approach). That's because pain is created in the brain, and the gut and the brain are connected in intricate and complicated ways. Tatta considers core nutritional healing an absolutely essential part of pain management.

"When there's inflammation in the gut, tight junctures in the intestinal lining begin to loosen, and particles that weren't meant to get into the bloodstream can now get in," Tatta explains. "The immune

system mounts an attack against these undigested particles, and pain is very often a by-product of that process. That's why healing what's called leaky gut—and preventing inflammation—is so important in a functional approach to pain."

Tatta is also a big fan of the ketogenic diet, a high-fat diet sufficiently low in carbs to force your body to use ketones instead of sugar for energy. (Ketones are metabolic by-products of fat burning.) "Ketogenic diets can be pain relieving," he explains, "because they help quiet a sensitive nervous system just as they help quiet a hypersensitive brain in childhood epilepsy."

The bottom line: "There's no single fix for pain," Tatta concludes. "It's a complicated interaction between your brain and body, and often requires an integrative approach to healing that includes optimal nutrition, movement, and retraining someone's thoughts or mindset about what pain really is."



Jonny Bowden, PhD, CNS, is a board-certified nutritionist and the best-selling author of 14 books. His latest is *Smart Fat: Eat More Fat, Lose More Weight, Get Healthy Now* (written with Steven Masley, MD). Visit him at jonnybowden.com. Have a question for Jonny? Send it to amazingwellnessmag@gmail.com. Write "Health Q&A" in the subject line.