

# Alternative therapies for chronic non-malignant pain: Exploring complementary approaches.

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## Introduction

Chronic Non-Malignant Pain (CNMP) is a complex condition that poses significant challenges for both patients and healthcare providers. While conventional treatments such as medication and physical therapies play a vital role in pain management, alternative therapies have gained attention as complementary approaches to enhance overall well-being and alleviate pain. This article aims to explore various alternative therapies that have shown promise in managing CNMP, providing individuals with additional options for comprehensive pain care.

## Acupuncture

Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese therapy that involves the insertion of thin needles into specific points on the body. This practice aims to balance the flow of energy, known as Qi, along the body's meridians. Research suggests that acupuncture may stimulate the release of endorphins, the body's natural pain-relieving chemicals, and modulate the central nervous system's pain perception. Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of acupuncture in reducing pain intensity and improving physical function in individuals with CNMP, particularly musculoskeletal and neuropathic pain [1].

## Massage therapy

Massage therapy involves the manipulation of soft tissues in the body, including muscles, tendons, and ligaments, to promote relaxation and relieve pain. It can help increase blood flow, reduce muscle tension, and stimulate the release of endorphins. Studies have shown that massage therapy can be effective in managing various types of CNMP, such as low back pain, fibromyalgia, and osteoarthritis. It offers both physical and psychological benefits, including pain reduction, improved sleep, and decreased anxiety [2].

## Mind-body techniques

Mind-body techniques, including meditation, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and yoga, focus on the connection between the mind and body to promote relaxation, reduce stress, and alleviate pain. Meditation involves training the mind to achieve a state of focused attention and awareness, which can help individuals develop a different relationship with their pain. MBSR combines meditation, gentle yoga, and mindfulness exercises to cultivate non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. Numerous studies have

demonstrated the positive effects of mind-body techniques on pain management, psychological well-being, and quality of life in individuals with CNMP [3].

## Herbal remedies and supplements

Certain herbal remedies and supplements have been traditionally used for pain relief and may serve as adjunctive therapies for individuals with CNMP. Examples include turmeric, ginger, devil's claw, and omega-3 fatty acids. Turmeric contains curcumin, a compound known for its anti-inflammatory properties, while ginger has analgesic and anti-inflammatory effects. Devil's claw, derived from a South African plant, has shown promise in managing musculoskeletal pain. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish oil and flaxseed oil, possess anti-inflammatory properties. Although more research is needed to establish their efficacy and safety specifically for CNMP, these herbal remedies and supplements may be considered under the guidance of a healthcare provider.

## Chiropractic care

Chiropractic care focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders, particularly those affecting the spine. Chiropractors use manual manipulation techniques, including spinal adjustments and mobilization, to restore proper alignment, reduce pain, and improve overall function. Studies have indicated that chiropractic care can be beneficial for individuals with CNMP, such as chronic low back pain and neck pain. It is often combined with other treatments, such as exercise and physical therapy, to optimize outcomes [4].

## Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS)

TENS involves the application of low-voltage electrical currents to the skin via electrodes, targeting specific areas of pain. This therapy works by stimulating the nerves and altering pain signals, providing temporary pain relief. TENS is commonly used for various types of CNMP, including neuropathic pain and musculoskeletal pain. It is a non-invasive, safe, and drug-free option that can be self-administered by individuals in the comfort of their homes.

## Biofeedback

Biofeedback is a technique that enables individuals to gain control over physiological processes, such as heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension, through visual or auditory feedback. It helps individuals develop self-regulation skills

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and reduce pain by enhancing awareness and control over their bodily functions. Biofeedback has been found to be effective in managing CNMP, particularly tension headaches, migraines, and temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders. It can be used in conjunction with other therapies as part of a comprehensive treatment plan [5].

## Conclusion

Alternative therapies offer additional avenues for individuals with chronic non-malignant pain to manage their condition and enhance overall well-being. Acupuncture, massage therapy, mind-body techniques, herbal remedies and supplements, chiropractic care, TENS, and biofeedback are among the alternative therapies that have shown promise in relieving pain and improving quality of life. However, it is essential to approach these therapies with caution and under the guidance of a healthcare provider, ensuring they are integrated into a comprehensive treatment plan. By exploring a combination of conventional and alternative approaches, individuals with CNMP can optimize pain management and regain control over their lives.

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