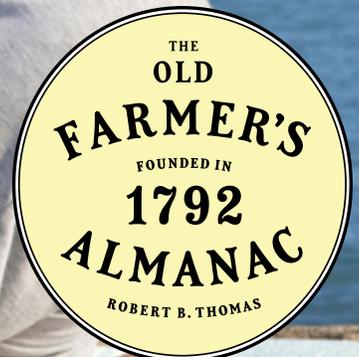


# NATURAL HEALTH & HOME REMEDIES



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# NATURAL HEALTH & HOME REMEDIES

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## How Can YOU Ease Your Pain?

We ALL live with aches and pains—some worse than others.

Sometimes, it starts with questions: “Why does my hand hurt? What is causing these severe leg cramps?”

In this guide, you’ll find useful tips to limit and lessen your body’s aches and pains—from your head to your feet.

But also, we give you a greater understanding of your pain to help YOU find the best way to manage your discomfort.

This guide is a collaboration between *The Old Farmer’s Almanac* and Real Time Pain Relief, two family-run businesses with heritages of trust.

The Almanac has a long history of providing natural remedies and age-old wisdom. The folks at Real Time Pain Relief are experts in fast, targeted pain relief, using nature’s ingredients to offer relief while triggering the body’s own pain-relieving mechanisms.



Here you’ll find 10 articles with information about and solutions for all types of pain and discomfort, whether from muscle tension, bruises, cramps, and more—even growing pains. We know that they’ll help you to find relief!

And remember to think positively! Researchers have found that thinking positively about pain can do more than just make you feel happier—it also can reduce pain-related activity in your brain.

Intense feelings of love can also provide pain relief, so give lots of TLC to those pain points—and make sure that YOU get some loving, too!

Yours for a pain-free life,

*The Old Farmer’s Almanac* and Real Time Pain Relief

## 9 TIPS FOR RELIEF FROM GROWING PAINS

by Real Time Pain Relief

If your child has issues with growing pains, it can be a trying situation. Pain can make it hard to sleep at night, and you will do whatever you can to relieve your child's pain. Fortunately, there are steps that you can take to soothe growing pains.

### WHAT ARE GROWING PAINS?

Growing pains tend to affect children who are between the ages of 3 and 5, and later on between the ages of 8 and 12. Since they're called "growing pains," many people believe that this has some connection to childhood growth. However, a clear cause of growing pains has yet to be established. Most health experts believe that it is just soreness that comes from the everyday life of being an active child. The long days of running, jumping, and climbing can stress the body, and this manifests as soreness when a child is relaxing.



### COMMON SYMPTOMS

For most children, growing pains occur in the evening and during sleep, and the pain is gone by the morning. Growing pains usually occur in the legs and cause soreness in the thighs, behind the knees, and in the calf muscles.

### 9 WAYS TO EASE THE PAINS

#### 1. MASSAGE

Since the problem is with overworked and tired muscles, massaging the area in pain is one of the best treatment options. Gentle massage can work some of the tightness and soreness out of the muscles and help your child to relax. Ask your child where the pain is and gently rub the entire muscle group for a few minutes.

#### 2. STRETCHING

Stretching can be one of the keys to relieving and preventing growing pains. A great time for stretches is before physical activity since this helps to keep the muscles loose and ready for activity. Teach your children some stretches like toe touches, leg raises, and lunges. You can also encourage your child to perform some stretches before bedtime.

#### 3. TOPICAL PAIN RELIEF

A topical pain reliever can be great for a child who is suffering from growing pains. Topical pain relief lotions or creams can be applied directly to the area experiencing growing pains, and they can provide relief much faster than NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) or acetaminophen.

#### 4. HEAT THERAPY

Since growing pains are primarily associated with sore muscles, heat therapy can be an effective treatment option. Heat can help to promote blood flow, soothe pain, and loosen up tight muscle contractions. You can apply a heating pad to the area in pain or have your child take a warm bath or shower.

#### 5. FOOTWEAR

You also want to make sure that your child has good, supportive footwear. Shoes need to provide adequate support for the ankles and arches. If they lack such support, this can impact the way that your child walks or runs, which can stress the legs and contribute to growing pains.

## 9 TIPS FOR RELIEF FROM GROWING PAINS (CONT.)

### 6. VITAMIN D

Certain vitamin deficiencies can contribute to problems with growing pains. A 2015 study published in the journal *Medical Principles and Practice* showed that many children who deal with growing pains also have a vitamin D deficiency. Researchers found that vitamin D supplements can be an effective remedy for reducing the severity of growing pains for these children.

### 7. HYDRATION

Encourage your child to drink water before and after playing. As the body dehydrates, muscles are more susceptible to being tight and sore, which can lead to growing pains. If you notice that your child is sweating a lot, you can also offer them a low-sugar electrolyte drink to help to replenish their body's electrolytes.

### 8. KEEP THEM ACTIVE

In many cases, children who have the worst problems with growing pains are infrequently active. If children don't get regular exercise but then suddenly have an active day of playing or participating in a sport, they may deal with a round of growing pains.

Encourage your child to get regular activity, so that their muscles will be accustomed to a workload. This can help to make growing pains less frequent and less severe. If your child can't get out on some days, consider teaching them some in-home exercises.

### 9. REST

Of course, there are times when your child has been very active, and in those moments, your child will more than likely need a day or two of rest from activity. Sometimes the body just needs time to rest and heal.

Did you know that Arnica montana can help to relieve pain? [Find out how!](#)

Is pain keeping you up at night? [Here are 9 simple tricks to get better sleep tonight!](#)

## 10 SECRETS TO TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOUR FEET

by Real Time Pain Relief

You use your feet every day for standing, walking, running, and staying active in a multitude of ways, so taking care of them should be a top priority. Improper foot care can lead not only to odor problems and skin conditions, but also to a great deal of pain and discomfort in the feet, ankles, and lower legs. Here are our top 10 tips to help you take good care of your feet.

### 1. CHOOSE COMFORTABLE FOOTWEAR

The right shoes make a big difference when it comes to the health of your feet. When looking for new shoes, here are some factors to consider:

- *Do the shoes fit correctly?*
  - Shoes that are too big can cause blisters, calluses, and sore heels.
  - Tight shoes can lead to corns, ingrown toenails, and hammertoe.
- *Do they have proper heel and arch support?*
  - Shoes with insufficient support can lead to posture problems, lower back issues, and joint pain in the knees and hips.

## 10 SECRETS TO TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOUR FEET (CONT.)

### 2. *BUY SHOES IN THE AFTERNOON*

As the day goes on, it is common for our feet to be slightly bigger due to foot swelling, especially if you stand or walk most of the day. Shoes that fit in the morning might be too tight later in the day, so it's best to shop later in the day, or after you finish work.

### 3. *WASH YOUR FEET DAILY*

Our feet sweat more than the rest of our body and spend most of the day cooped up inside socks and shoes, so they don't get much room to breathe. Because of this, you should focus on including a daily foot washing routine to prevent bacteria growth, fungal infections, and foot odor.

Wash your feet with soap and warm water and pay special attention to the areas between your toes to prevent the growth of bacteria and fungi.

### 4. *KEEP YOUR FEET DRY*

After you shower or wash your feet, make sure to dry them thoroughly because damp conditions make fungal infections such as athlete's foot more likely to develop. Foot powder or cornstarch can be sprinkled on feet to absorb any excess moisture. At the end of each day, allow your shoes to air out properly.

If your socks get wet or damp with sweat, change them quickly. Otherwise, the constant moisture provides the perfect environment for foot fungus to grow. If shoes are wet, remove them, dry your feet, stuff shoes with newspaper, and dry completely before wearing again.

### 5. *MOISTURIZE YOUR FEET*

Moisturizing your feet regularly can help to prevent dry and cracked skin. Overly dry heels can lead to heel fissures, those painful deep cracks that can cause you to limp and are even at risk for infection.

When applying a foot cream, pay attention to the soles and tops of your feet, but avoid getting any lotion in between the toes. After applying, allow a few minutes for the moisturizer to absorb into the skin. For the best results, apply lotion before bedtime and enjoy soft, moisturized feet in the morning.



## 10 SECRETS TO TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOUR FEET (CONT.)

### 6. TRIM YOUR TOENAILS

This concept is a little tricky because toenails that are too long or too short can lead to painful ingrown toenails. Here are some tips.

- Aim to have the edge of your nails reaching the tips of your toes.
- Avoid letting your nails hang over the toe.
- Trim your toenails straight across without rounding off the edges; this will help to prevent the nails from growing into the skin.
- When clipping the nail, use small clips across the nail rather than clipping it with one try.
- If your nails have sharp corners after trimming, smooth them with a nail file.
- When filing nails, move the file gently in one direction, rather than back and forth.
- Make sure that nails are dry before trimming them; wet nails are softer and at risk of tearing, bending, or not cutting smoothly.
- For best trimming results, invest in a pair of nail clippers or manicure scissors. Using items like knives or scissors is dangerous.

### 7. EXERCISE YOUR FEET REGULARLY

Just as with muscles, you need to exercise your feet regularly to keep them strong and healthy. This can be as simple as walking a little every day, but there are also some easy exercises that you can do with your feet. Here are a couple of ideas to help strengthen the muscles in your feet:

- Standing with your feet flat on the floor, try to write the letters of the alphabet with your feet.
- Put a pen or something like a marble on the floor and try to pick it up with your toes.

### 8. STRETCH YOUR FEET

Stretching your feet on a regular basis can help you to maintain healthy and supple muscles, tendons, and ligaments in your feet and lower legs. It can even help to prevent Achilles tendinitis, which is caused when the Achilles tendon becomes tight and overused.

Here is a great stretch for you to try:

- Stand on a step or raised platform with your heels hanging over the edge.
- Drop your heels below the edge of the step while keeping your toes on the step.
- You should feel this stretch down the back of your lower leg.

### 9. AVOID WEARING OTHER PEOPLE'S SHOES

Wearing used shoes increases your risk for developing foot conditions such as athlete's foot and verrucas (plantar warts). If the previous feet in those shoes dealt with bacteria or other foot issues, they can transfer to your own feet.

### 10. WEAR SHOWER SHOES IN PUBLIC SHOWERS

Due to the number of people using public showers and their damp conditions, bacteria thrive. If these bacteria come into contact with your bare feet, you can become susceptible to athlete's foot and verrucas (plantar warts). To avoid contracting these conditions when using a public shower, wear flip-flops or sandals.

Dealing with knee pain? [Here are 12 tips to help you avoid it!](#)

Have you ever used helichrysum oil? [Here are 6 reasons that you will fall in love with it!](#)

## 10 TIPS TO RELIEVE MUSCLE TENSION

by Real Time Pain Relief

Muscle tension is a very common problem that can affect people of all ages, especially adults. When we talk about muscle tension, what we mean is a feeling of tightness or pressure in a specific muscle or muscle group. Tension is often accompanied by pain, soreness, and a restricted range of motion.

Any muscle in the body can experience this feeling of tension, but it is most common in the muscles of the back, neck, and shoulders. For many people, persistent tension in the muscles of the upper back, neck, or shoulders also causes intense headaches.

Muscle tension can be caused by a number of different factors, including:

- anxiety and stress
- poor diet
- lack of exercise
- certain illnesses, such as flu or cold

Fortunately, there are some alternatives to help you to get relief for muscle tension. Here are 10 of the best ways that we have found for you:

### **1. ACTIVE LIFESTYLE**

Movement provides relief for tense muscles and promotes healthy muscles, making them less likely to experience tension. Exercises that strengthen and stretch the tense muscles will help to loosen them up. When muscles are really tense, it may be difficult to get up and move. In times like this, you can remain sitting and stretch the muscle and move the associated joint until you feel loosened up enough to get up.

### **2. HEAT THERAPY**

Heat therapy helps to relieve tension, loosen up the muscle fibers, and promote circulation. Heat application opens the capillaries, allowing more blood to flow to the area. You can enjoy heat therapy by applying a heating pad or by taking a hot bath or shower.

Note: When it comes to muscle tension, heat is best. Cold applications can actually cause your body to tense up in response to the uncomfortable temperature.

### **3. TOPICAL PAIN RELIEF**

Topical pain relievers can help to provide quick relief. They give you the ability to rub relief directly into the area experiencing soreness and tension. Pain relief lotions create a heated feeling where applied, which can cause the brain to release natural chemicals that distract the mind.

### **4. MASSAGE**

Massage is one of the best options for relief. It relaxes tense muscles and increases circulation, especially during a bad bout of tension. A certified massage therapist will have experience and training when it comes to working on muscle tension. They will be able to identify the different areas of your body that need work.

Tip: Take your topical pain relief lotion along and ask your therapist to use it rather than a basic oil.

## 10 TIPS TO RELIEVE MUSCLE TENSION (CONT.)

### 5. NUTRITION AND SUPPLEMENTS

If you have problems with muscle tension, you may need to pay attention to your levels of vitamin D, magnesium, and calcium.

Vitamin D is important for maintaining healthy muscles. The best way to get vitamin D is to spend time in the sun, but this may not always be practical. Look for a supplement or purchase foods that have been fortified with vitamin D.

Magnesium promotes healthy muscles. You can eat a magnesium-rich diet or apply a topical magnesium oil. The body is able to use magnesium that has been absorbed by the skin.

Calcium plays an important role in the healthy function of muscles. To get more calcium, eat plenty of calcium-rich foods or find a good supplement.

### 6. STRESS MANAGEMENT

Psychological triggers like anxiety and stress are some of the most common causes of muscle tension. When a person starts to feel anxious or overstressed, the muscles can react by tightening up. This causes tension that can also lead to soreness, pain, and tension headaches.

Many people find success in managing their stress by practicing relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing, meditation, and stretching exercises.

### 7. ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture has been shown to be effective for pain and muscle tension. In fact, one randomized study published in the British Medical Journal came to the conclusion that acupuncture can actually do more to relieve pain and tension in the neck than conventional massage.

The process of acupuncture involves the insertion of thin needles into different trigger points of the body, which can stimulate the nervous system in a way that relieves pain.

If you are concerned about the needles, try acupressure. It is the same concept, but instead of having needles inserted, pressure is applied to the trigger points.

### 8. REST

Muscle tension can result from overworked muscles that are in need of proper rest. If you work a physical job, then muscle tension might be a side effect. On your next day off, try to spend time relaxing. As for exercising, know your limits and avoid pushing your body to extremes. Make sure to give your muscles time to rest and heal.

### 9. ERGONOMICS AND POSTURE

Muscle tension can also be caused by poor posture and ergonomics, which places stress on the muscles and leads to muscle tension. Evaluate how you hold your body when engaging in different activities.

- Do you slouch when you sit or stand?
- Do you hunch your shoulders?
- Do you hold your mobile phone low when you are texting?
- When standing, do you lean to one side?
- Does your chair provide adequate support?
- Is your desk ergonomically friendly?

## 10 TIPS TO RELIEVE MUSCLE TENSION (CONT.)

To get the help you need, you may need to talk to a chiropractor or physical therapist. You can also find some really neat apps for your phone or device that will evaluate your posture, give you tips, and even track your progress.

### 10. SLEEP

A good night's rest is important for the health of your muscles. Sleep time is the best way for your muscles to rest and recover from the day's activity. Here are some things to consider:

- Could your sleeping position be putting stress on your muscles?
- Is your mattress too firm or too soft?
- Is your pillow positioned correctly?
- Does any part of the body lack support?
- Do you feel pressure or tension in any muscles or joints?

Dealing with muscle cramps? [Here are 6 tricks to help you get fast relief.](#)

Have you ever considered topical pain relief? [Here are 4 reasons to fall in love with it!](#)

## 10 WAYS TO REDUCE HAND PAIN

by Real Time Pain Relief

We rely on our hands for many daily tasks, so when hand pain strikes, we want fast relief. Whether from arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, or something else, hand pain makes things more difficult and might even make your hobbies less fun. Here are 10 ways to help you to relieve pain in your hands and knuckles.

### 1. COLD COMPRESSION

Cold applications can help to reduce swelling, inflammation, and pain inside the hand. Some things to note about cold therapy:

- Do not leave ice on the area for more than 30 minutes at a time.
- If you start to feel worse after the first few minutes, immediately remove the ice pack and try an alternative remedy.
- To avoid irritation, wrap the ice pack in a cloth before applying to skin.



### 2. HAND EXERCISES

Hand and finger exercises can improve flexibility and mobility in the hands, as well as reduce stiffness and pain.

- *Finger lifts:* Place your hand flat on the table, palm side down. Start by lifting your pinky finger as high as you can without lifting your palm off of the table. Hold the pinky finger up for a few seconds, then slowly place it back on the table. Try to keep each finger in the air for a few seconds. Repeat this step for each finger and repeat as often as you like.
- *Finger bends:* Simply hold your hand in front of your body and bend each finger toward the palm. Keep the finger there for a few seconds before stretching it back out.

## 10 WAYS TO REDUCE HAND PAIN (CONT.)

### 3. COMPRESSION

Compression can boost blood circulation and relieve stiffness in the joints. You can wrap an elastic bandage around your hand to help to control inflammation and pain, or there are special “gloves” available. These gloves are designed to fit snugly around the hands, knuckles, and fingers.

Some important things to remember about compression are:

- The compression wrap should be snug, but not so tight that it is uncomfortable.
- If compression causes pain, talk with your doctor about whether compression is right for you or not.

### 4. ASSISTIVE DEVICES

There are a variety of products and devices out there that can help to make everyday tasks easier to perform. When you have pain and inflammation in the hands, it may be much harder to do everyday things like open a jar or even take off your shoes. That’s why there are many handy assistive devices on the market, including but not limited to:

- buttonhooks
- long-handled shoehorns
- zipper pullers
- jar openers
- book holders
- extended key holders

### 5. NUTRITION

Most hand pain is caused by inflammation, and luckily there are foods and supplements available that can help with these symptoms. Here are some specific aids to look for:

- turmeric
- honey and cinnamon powder
- omega-3 fatty acids
- Boswellia serrata
- gingerroot Extract
- tart cherry juice
- vitamin D
- green tea
- berries
- avocado oil
- collagen

### 6. MASSAGE

Simple massaging techniques can improve blood flow and reduce inflammation. Even just 5 to 10 minutes of massage and applying pressure to your hand and fingers can reduce pain.

### 7. TOPICAL PAIN RELIEF

A pain relief lotion is a great choice to ease pain without worrying about the side effects that pain medication can have. Apply a pain relief lotion that contains an active ingredient such as menthol, arnica, or trolamine salicylate. For optimal relief, use a pain relief lotion a few times a day.

### 8. ERGONOMIC DEVICES

Since many of us rely on computers every day, hand pain is a common issue. This is where ergonomic devices can help—they are designed to reduce physical stress on the hands and wrists. Here are some devices to check out:

- ergonomic or “split” keyboards
- hands-free headsets
- ergonomic computer mice
- mouse pads with a supportive cushion for your wrist
- ergonomic chairs that properly support the back
- ergonomic gloves for gripping, handling, carrying or lifting items during your work hours.

## 10 WAYS TO REDUCE HAND PAIN (CONT.)

### 9. EPSOM SALT SOAK

Epsom salt soaks are a great way to combat inflammation. Soak your hands for 30 minutes at least once a day in a bowl of warm water and dissolved Epsom salts. Or, you can mix Epsom salts in warm oil until dissolved and massage the mixture over your hands.

### 10. HEAT APPLICATION

Applying heat to sore hands can help with pain and blood circulation. You can use heat application by soaking your hand in warm water or applying a warm compress for 15 to 30 minutes.

[Here are 10 other ideas to help you to get relief for hand and knuckle pain.](#)

[Learn how Boswellia serrata supplements can help to improve joint comfort and reduce stiffness!](#)

## 10 TIPS TO REDUCE BRUISING FASTER

by Real Time Pain Relief

We have all had a bruise at one time or another, and all too often it is at the most inconvenient time. Here are some natural remedies to help you lose the bruise faster.

### WHAT ARE BRUISES AND WHY DO WE GET THEM?

A bruise is caused when the tiny blood vessels under the skin are damaged or broken as a result of trauma. This trauma can be anything from bumping into the coffee table to getting hit with something forceful or falling. In fact, you can probably come up with a long list of the ways that you have bruised yourself. But you have probably also noticed some bruises that have appeared without you being able to remember what caused them. So, the next time you notice a bruise, remember these 10 home remedies.

#### 1. ARNICA

Arnica can help to reduce the pain of a bruise. At least twice a day, apply an arnica-based lotion to the affected area until the bruise clears up. It can be handy to always have an arnica product in the medicine cabinet to apply it right after an injury occurs (even before you can see the bruising) because it can help to minimize the bruising that forms.

#### 2. CABBAGE LEAVES

Cabbage leaves possess vitamins as well as phytonutrients. Phytonutrients possess anti-inflammatory properties, which help to reduce swelling. Cabbage also contains vitamin K and vitamin C, both of which are anti-bruising agents.

To use cabbage leaves to treat bruises, begin by cutting the hard stem out of the cabbage leaves. Next, soak the leaves in hot water to soften them. Once they have softened, use a rolling pin to knead the leaves into a paste. Apply the crushed cabbage leaves to the bruise and secure with gauze. Leave the cabbage on the bruise for 30 minutes.

#### 3. CASTOR OIL

Castor oil promotes lymph flow, boosts white blood cell production, and soothes the area. Plus, it can help to minimize discoloration. To use for bruising, apply castor oil to a cotton pad or ball, place it on the bruise, and then wrap it with gauze. Allow it to sit at least 15 minutes, or until the pain subsides.

## 10 TIPS TO REDUCE BRUISING FASTER (CONT.)

### 4. TEA BAGS

Both green and black tea bags contain tannins, which help to constrict blood vessels when applied to the skin. This constriction stops blood from flowing to the bruises and helps to get rid of the discoloration that accompanies bruises. Tea also contains bioflavonoids that can help to reduce swelling and pain. To use a tea bag, soak it in warm water for 3 minutes, then place on the affected area and leave on for several minutes. Repeat application several times a day.

### 5. WITCH HAZEL

For generations, witch hazel has been used as a natural treatment for skin problems. It contains natural astringent properties that make it an excellent remedy for bruises. To apply, soak a thin cloth in witch hazel and apply it to the bruise for a few minutes at least twice a day. Repeat this process every day until the bruising disappears.

### 6. ONION

As long as your skin has not been cut, onion can help to reduce bruises. Onions contain a compound called alliin, which is what causes you to tear up when you cut into an onion. However, alliin is also responsible for stimulating lymphatic flow and preventing excess blood from collecting below the skin.

Here are two ways to use onion for your bruise.

- Cut up the onion and place a slice or two on the bruise. Wrap it with gauze to hold it in place for at least 15 minutes.
- Dip onion slices in apple cider vinegar and then gently rub the bruised area with them.

### 7. PARSLEY

Parsley may help bruises to fade more quickly because it contains high amounts of vitamin K. Fresh parsley is the most effective for bruises. Simply crush the parsley leaves, spread the crushed leaves over your bruise, and secure them with a bandage.

### 8. SAINT-JOHN'S-WORT OIL

Saint-John's-wort contains large amounts of tannins, which are astringents that can help with capillary bleeding. These properties can help to reduce the discoloration and the healing time. Apply Saint-John's-wort oil to your bruise several times a day until the bruising has cleared up.

### 9. SUNLIGHT

Ultraviolet rays are known to break down bilirubin, a by-product of hemoglobin breakdown that causes bruises to turn a yellowish color as it fades. Exposing the bruise to sunlight for 10 to 15 minutes can help to accelerate the breakdown of bilirubin.

### 10. VINEGAR

Vinegar is known to increase blood flow near the skin's surface. This helps to dissipate the blood that has pooled in the bruised area. Simply mix vinegar with warm water and soak a thin cloth in the mixture. Apply the thin cloth to the bruised area for a few minutes several times a day.

### OTHER TIPS FOR TREATING BRUISES

- Use your preferred remedy from above as many times as possible throughout the day.
- Apply a heating pad to your bruise to help with the swelling and pain. A cold pack is also effective at providing relief.
- Elevate the injured area as much as you can. This encourages the blood to flow away from the injury, which can help reduce swelling and discoloration.

## 10 TIPS TO REDUCE BRUISING FASTER (CONT.)

Recovering from a recent injury? [Here are 6 tips that you need to know to have an optimal recovery.](#)

Have you heard about the health benefits of grape seed extract? [Here are 3 reasons to start taking it for your health!](#)

## HOW DOES FLEXIBILITY IMPACT BODY PAIN?

by Real Time Pain Relief

A common misconception is that exercise causes pain, when actually the issue of pain is often rooted in a lack of flexibility. Flexibility is about the mobility of joints and the muscles' ability to move freely around the joints, giving them the ability to achieve their full range of motion. However, when we lack this essential tool of flexibility, the body sends misinformation on how to move.

Our bodies are capable of adapting to this limited range of motion, but over time this can lead to compromised body positions and posture. Hence, more pain. In other words, flexibility is the mechanism that allows your body to move without restriction. When a mobility restriction is present, our joints begin to deal with inflammation, stiffness, and pain.

What if we could combat this stiffness and reduce pain just by stretching every day? Well, you can! Exercise helps to reduce your perception of pain and overcome limited mobility and functioning. The more you move, the better you feel.

But, did you know that you don't necessarily need to be in a gym to reap these benefits of flexibility? You can work on improving your flexibility in the comfort of your own home!

The prescription: Get into a nice, comfortable stretch. Hold it for 15 to 30 seconds. Breathe deeply. Rinse. Repeat.

## 5 STRETCHES TO INCREASE YOUR FLEXIBILITY

Here are some stretches that play a major role in increasing flexibility—plus, they can be performed by anyone, anywhere:

### **1. SEATED OVERHEAD STRETCH: (TARGETS: SHOULDERS)**

Sit with your back straight in a chair and feet planted firmly on the ground. Relax your arms at your sides. Slowly lift your arms straight in front of you and interlace your fingers. While maintaining straight arms, continue raising your arms above your head. Hold the highest position that you can manage without pain for 15 seconds, then lower your arms down to the starting position and repeat 3 to 5 times.

### **2. SEATED SIDE-TO-SIDE STRETCH (TARGETS: BACK & ABDOMINALS)**

Sitting upright with your feet shoulder-width apart, put your hands on the back of your head with both elbows bent in opposite directions. Slowly bend at the waist to drop the left elbow toward your left side until you feel a stretch in the right side of your body. Do the same motion on the right side, feeling the stretch in your left side. Hold each for 10 seconds and repeat for 5 to 10 times on each side.

## HOW DOES FLEXIBILITY IMPACT BODY PAIN? (CONT.)

### 3. KNEE-TO-CHEST STRETCH (TARGETS: KNEES, QUADRICEPS & LOWER BACK)

Lie on the floor with your legs extended and arms at your sides. Bend your left knee and with both hands grab your left thigh and start slowly pulling it toward your chest. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Release your leg back to flat on the ground. Repeat on the other side for a total of 5 times on each side.

### 4. FOLD OVER STRETCH (TARGETS: NECK, BACK, CALVES, HAMSTRINGS, GLUTES)

Stand upright with feet positioned hip-width apart. Bend your knees slightly (or as much as is comfortable). Bend forward at the hips and lower your head toward the ground. While keeping your head, shoulders, and neck relaxed, wrap your arms around the back of your legs and hold the stretch for up to 1 minute. To release the stretch, bend your knees deeper and roll up slowly, with your head the last thing to come up.

### 5. RELAXED LUNGE (TARGETS: HIP FLEXORS, QUADRICEPS, AND HAMSTRINGS)

Kneel on your shins on the floor. Pick your left leg up and extend it so that your left knee is bent at a 90-degree angle in front of you and your left foot is flat on the floor directly under your knee. Your right shin remains on the floor. Place your hands on the top of your left knee and press away, pushing your hips forward and keeping your back upright. Hold for 30 seconds and release. Switch legs and repeat 3 times on each side.

Are you looking for better ways to relieve your pain? [Learn about some safe and effective pain relief alternatives to NSAIDs and Painkillers.](#)

[Did you know that Ginger Root Extract can help you improve joint comfort and pain?](#)

## ICE OR HEAT: HOME REMEDIES FOR PAIN

By Margaret Boyles

Nothing eases everyday pains, strains, aches, and bruises like cold and heat. But which conditions respond to heat therapy and which to cold therapy?

As someone who spent many midlife years running in summer triathlons and who enjoys a physically demanding self-reliant rural life, I count heat and cold among my most important first-aid remedies.

Strained muscles, Achilles tendinitis, tennis elbow (I got mine from a day of tossing cordwood off a wood-splitting machine), big bruises, bumps on the head—I've known 'em all. Advancing age has brought painful arthritis in knees, neck, back, elbows, wrists, thumbs, and fingers.

But when do you use heat and when to you use cold? Let's review which is best—and learn how to make an easy cold pack and heat pack, too.



Should you use ice or heat on your aches and pains?  
Harvard Health Publications

## ICE OR HEAT: HOME REMEDIES FOR PAIN (CONT.)

### WHEN TO ICE (COLD THERAPY)

Use cold to treat an acute injury with swelling—sprains, bumps, bruises, tendinitis. Cold numbs the nerves and constricts the blood vessels, reducing swelling and tissue breakdown and easing pain. (It also works for temporarily reducing under-eye puffiness.)

The time-honored cold pack for a sprain or a fresh, swollen bruise is a bag of frozen corn or peas. The bag conforms to the injured part and treats the injury—then you eat the thawed vegetables for supper.

In winter, I've stuffed a plastic bag with snow. I've also frozen water in a paper cup, torn back the top of the cup, and massaged the injured part with the ice. Slow, circular massaging movements help to prevent frostbite that can occur from continuous application.

You can make your own reusable cold packs in a jiffy: Just fill a long, 100 percent cotton sock with rice, small beans, flax seed, dried corn kernels, or other hard seed or grain produce, leaving enough space to tie a knot. Keep a couple on hand in the freezer.

Endurance athletes sometimes hasten recovery by immersing their entire bodies in an ice bath.

### WHEN TO USE HEAT THERAPY

Heat is for more chronic, long-lasting aches and pains.

Nothing soothes muscle tension or arthritis like a heat pack. Gentle heat opens blood vessels to improve blood supply to an area and helps to stretch tight muscles.

Don't use heat (or provide it to someone else) on open/recent wounds or swollen areas. Before treating with heat, consult a health professional if you have a skin condition, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, or a vascular disease.

For a DIY heat pack, fill a cotton sock with seeds. Toss it into the microwave for about 2 minutes or into the oven until it's warm to the touch.

If you're handy with a sewing machine, you can make a cover of any size and shape to fill with seeds. A zippered opening will allow you to remove the seeds and wash the cover.

I have a large, seed-filled "cape" that drapes over my shoulders, upper back, and chest, with a short collar that comes up around my neck. Mmmm! Heavenly heat after a long day hunched over a computer or splitting wood.

### DRY, IRRITATED, TIRED EYES

A warm, moist compress also helps to ease dry, irritated, tired eyes at the end of the day. Massage gently downward over the lids to stimulate the production of both tears and the oils that help to prevent tear evaporation.

### USING A COLD OR HEAT PACK

If you plan to leave either a cold pack or a hot pack in place, keep a piece of flannel or a thin towel between you and the pack to protect your skin from injury. Medical professionals recommend leaving either a cold or a hot pack in place for 10 to 15 minutes, then removing it and waiting half an hour before reapplying.

## LEG CRAMPS AT NIGHT: CAUSES AND REMEDIES.

By Margaret Boyles

Eeow! Startled from a deep sleep, you suddenly come to with a shriek, as your calf, thigh, or maybe the arch of your foot contracts in violent pain. Commonly called a “Charley horse,” this is a common and painful occurrence. Discover what causes leg cramps at night, as well as how you can prevent and relieve them.

Emerging groggily from the edge of sleep or from a deep sleep, you struggle to straighten your leg, pull your toes forward, perhaps kneading the knotted muscles with your thumbs. After the spasms subside, you may get up and try to hobble around a bit to loosen up the painful area a little more.

By now you’re completely awake, and you may not return to sleep. The cramped muscles may remain tender for hours or even days.

The nighttime “Charley horse” is an age-old, global problem. Other languages use terms that translate into phrases like *muscle hangover*, *wooden leg*, *thigh hen*, *thigh cookie*, *donkey bite*, *old woman*, and *water buffalo*.

### WHAT CAUSES LEG CRAMPS AT NIGHT?

Sixty percent of adults say they’ve experienced nocturnal leg or foot cramps at some time in their lives.

Pregnant women and older people tend to suffer nighttime leg cramps more often than other groups, but medical experts say there’s often no clear explanation of why these nighttime leg cramps occur, listing many conditions that might bring one on, including:

- Hard exercise during the day
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Dehydration
- Neurological, neuromuscular, or endocrine disorders
- Lumbar stenosis
- Standing for long periods on concrete floors
- Sitting all day in a cramped position
- A side effect of some drugs



### LEG CRAMP REMEDIES

When a cramp startles you from sleep, here are 5 tips to manage the problem:

1. Take a few breaths and try to stay calm. Panicking may cause you to tighten the affected muscles even further and prolong or intensify the cramp.
2. If the cramp is in your arch or calf muscles, forcefully extend your toes toward your head and hold the stretch until the cramp subsides. This will release the tension so that the muscles can relax. You may need to sit up, bend over, and pull your toes forward with your hands.
3. If the cramp is in the back of your thigh, roll out of bed, bend at the waist, supporting yourself on your forearms, and keep bending forward until you feel the cramped muscles stretching out. Hold the stretch until the cramp abates.
4. I’ve had good luck using a towel or a woven stretching strap to help straighten out especially vicious hamstring cramps.
5. When the acute pain subsides, get up and walk around a bit to bring oxygen to the cramped muscles. A cold pack or hot pack may help. I like the long, rectangular “beanbags” (cloth sheaths filled with beans or other seeds) heated for a couple of minutes in the microwave and wrapped around sore muscles. (Great for arthritic joints, too.)

## LEG CRAMPS AT NIGHT: CAUSES AND REMEDIES. (CONT.)

### HOW TO PREVENT LEG CRAMPS

If you're prone to leg cramps at night, these 6 tips may help cramps from happening again:

1. A lot of uphill walking/running or stair-climbing shortens the back muscles and the muscles and tendons at the back of the legs, making them more likely to cramp later. Focus attention on stretching these muscle groups after a hilly workout.
2. Go for a deep-tissue therapeutic massage with an experienced practitioner. Ask her/him to teach you the techniques for the muscle groups in the legs and feet, so that you can work the knots out before they become disabling cramps.
3. Loosen the bedcovers so that they don't press your feet down and shorten the muscles of your arches, encouraging them to cramp.
4. Drink when you feel thirsty, especially after exercise. Don't overdo it. Tea, coffee, smoothies, fruit, and vegetables all contribute to your daily fluid needs.
5. Eat a variety of potassium- and magnesium-rich foods every day. Good choices: black beans, kidney beans, nuts and seeds, potatoes, sweet potatoes, leafy greens (especially beet greens), bananas, and other fruit.
6. Stay flexible with a regular stretching.

Here are two common stretches:

#### Basic calf stretch

Here's how to do it:

- Stand with your palms placed against a wall, with arms stretched out
- Step back with leg of affected calf
- Lean forward on the other leg and push against the wall
- You should feel a stretch in your calf muscle and the back of the leg.

#### Towel stretch

Do this stretch while you sit:

- Keep legs outstretched in front of you
- Point the toes of your affected foot at the ceiling so that the leg is engaged
- Take a towel or neck tie and wrap it around your foot, holding it with both hands
- Lift the leg slightly until you feel a good stretch
- Just stretching the affected muscles three times a week will help immensely. Hold stretch for at least 10 seconds, working up to 30 seconds. And perform each stretch 3 to 5 times.

The drug quinine, once prescribed to prevent night cramps, is now rarely prescribed for this use, because the possibility of severe adverse reactions outweighs the benefits of its use.

If you start having far more frequent or severe attacks of night cramps, see your doctor for an evaluation to rule out a more serious medical condition.

Don't confuse nighttime leg cramps with restless leg syndrome (RLS). RLS is annoying and may cause an aching sensation, but it's not usually painful and doesn't cause cramping.

## HOME REMEDIES FOR VARICOSE AND SPIDER VEINS

By Heather Blackmore

They're as common as mosquitoes in summer and about as beloved. Unfortunately, there's no repellent for varicose veins and spider veins, however, we'll explain the causes and provide health remedies to help.

### WHAT ARE VARICOSE AND SPIDER VEINS?

Varicose and spider veins are similar, but not exactly the same thing. Here's the difference between them, in terms of appearance:

- Varicose veins appear as gnarly, ribbonlike tubes that push against the skin, giving a raised, bubbly effect in shades of blue and purple.
- Spider veins look more like leafless tree limbs that sit just beneath the skin's surface, forming dense clusters in reds and blues.

While any vein can become varicose or spider, the legs, feet, and ankles are favorite hangouts. Thank you, gravity! Pressure from standing and walking increases blood pressure within the legs, which can compromise the circulatory system and inhibit the flow of blood from the lower extremities back to the heart. Spider veins also are common on the face, particularly around the nose and eyes, where skin is most delicate.

Usually, these vein issues are purely cosmetic in nature, but sometimes they can be a red flag for more serious circulatory issues and warrant a doctor's visit.

### SYMPTOMS OF VARICOSE VEINS

Besides the appearance, other symptoms include:

- aching or feelings of heaviness in the legs
- burning or throbbing in your legs
- cramping in your legs, particularly at night
- swollen feet and ankles
- bleeding from the vein
- itchiness around the vein
- pronounced pain in your legs after long periods of sitting or standing

Varicose veins are rarely a serious condition. If you have fears about blood clots or closed veins, know that varicose and spider veins are superficial; your body relies on much deeper vessels and veins for blood flow. However, see a professional if your veins are causing you pain, the skin is sore, or the aching is disturbing your sleep at night.



## HOME REMEDIES FOR VARICOSE AND SPIDER VEINS (CONT.)

### WHAT CAUSES VARICOSE VEINS?

Who gets varicose veins? Age and genetics are the most common risk factors, but there are a few others to consider.

- **Age:** Veins lose elasticity and weaken as we age, causing blood to pool and veins to bulge. More than 40% of women over age 50 and 75% of women over age 70 have varicose veins.
- **Genetics:** Well, you can finally blame your mom for something! The way your vein walls or valve functioning work runs in families.
- **Gender:** Women are more prone to the condition, which is believed to be linked to pregnancy with extra weight, greater abdominal pressure, and increased blood flow. Hormonal fluctuations also causes blood vessels to dilate. Hormone replacement therapy and birth control pills seem to increase your chances of developing the condition.
- **Obesity:** More weight puts more pressure on your leg veins. Moderately overweight women are more likely to have varicose veins than their thinner counterparts, and the risk is tripled in obese women.
- **Sedentary Lifestyle:** Lack of activity slows blood flow.
- **Occupation:** Having a job that requires prolonged standing is a risk factor. Women who spend more than 75% of their working time standing or walking are more likely to have varicose veins than others.

### HOME REMEDIES FOR VARICOSE VEINS AND SPIDER VEINS

While it's not possible to “cure” them, there are several home remedies for varicose and spider veins, including:

- **Movement!** Force yourself to get up every 30 minutes to 1 hour. Avoid sitting still or standing for long periods.
- **Exercise! Exercise! Exercise!** Even a daily 30-minute brisk walk can help to improve circulation, tone calf muscles, alleviate pressure, and reduce swelling—as well as support a healthy weight.
- **Put your feet up.** When at rest, elevate the legs. Raising your legs above the level of your heart gives your veins a break as they don't have to work against gravity.
- **Invest in compression stockings,** which can aid in contraction of the veins and muscles in the legs to increase blood flow. For mild symptoms, regular support stockings or over-the-counter compression stockings should help. For more severe symptoms, your health professional will prescribe a special stocking.
- **Increase fiber in diet.** This means incorporating more whole grains like bran, plus fruit and vegetables. Eating fiber reduces the chances of constipation.
- **Reduce salt intake.** Eating less salt can help with the swelling that comes with varicose veins.
- **Lose the high heels.** They put undue stress on your legs.
- **Avoid tight clothing** around the waist and legs.

That's about it. There are many misconceptions and “quick fixes” on the Internet that you should avoid. A couple examples of falsely advertised products include herbal supplements and creams containing vitamin K.

If all else fails and you've exhausted the self-care treatments, consult your doctor, who can suggest a variety of procedures, mostly outpatient, to alleviate your discomfort.

## HEADACHE TYPES AND TREATMENTS

By Heather Blackmore

Not all headaches are created equal. Learn about the many different types of headaches and headache treatments that will provide relief.

At some point, most of us will experience the sometimes debilitating and always irritating effects of a headache.

But before we get into the nitty-gritty of headache who's whos, there are some things you can do immediately to stave off a headache.

- Let down your locks. Seriously. Tight ponytails, braids, headbands, and even swim goggles can send you down the rabbit hole.
- And brace yourself for this one—caffeine, cheese, and chocolate are BIG migraine triggers.
- Too much or too little sleep is another common cause.
- And let's not forget stress.
- Get some exercise—even a brisk walk—or engage in an activity that allows you to decompress.

And, most important, consult your doctor if headaches are becoming a chronic problem.

Now let's look at treatments headache by headache:

### TYPES OF HEADACHES

While some headaches are tolerable and easily remedied with over-the-counter medications, others hold you prisoner until they're ready to subside. What's worse, they return unannounced and wreak havoc (like a dread-ed in-law) on daily life. Knowing the type of headache that you're experiencing can help you to figure out how to treat it.

### MIGRAINES

**Symptoms:** According to the American Migraine Foundation, approximately 36 million Americans suffer from migraines. This is no run-of-the-mill headache, and it can be hereditary (thank your parents for this lovely gene). Many sufferers report an aura that precedes the onset of migraine and is your body's way of saying "Brace yourself!" Aura can include seeing dots and lightning bolt-type lines, numbness or tingling on one side of the body, or sudden speech impediments. Vomiting and light sensitivity further add to the fun.

**Treatments:** Massage might take the edge off. Try rubbing your temples. Better yet, have someone do it for you and include your neck, head, back, and shoulders. Cold packs applied to the temples may also help.

And run away from the light! Bright light can aggravate a migraine. Also try over-the-counter pain meds and cross your fingers. If meds aren't your thing, acupuncture has been shown to be as effective as medicine. If all else fails, you may have to just ride it out in a dark, quiet room.



## HEADACHE TYPES AND TREATMENTS (CONT.)

### TENSION HEADACHES

**Symptoms:** The most common type of headache, tension headaches are characterized by a pressure that wraps around the head. Unlike migraines, they are not made worse by physical activity and sufferers are usually able to go about their daily lives.

**Treatments:** Relax! Try a little deep breathing or listen to relaxing music to help you unwind. Over-the-counter painkillers and caffeine are often effective, but repeated use can trigger rebound headaches.

### REBOUND HEADACHES

**Symptoms:** Now called “medication overuse headaches,” rebound headaches result from frequent use of pain meds and caffeine, which physicians believe interfere with the body’s pain sensors by decreasing pain tolerance. The result? Another headache. Sheesh!

**Treatments:** Eliminate the offending medication. The downside: Headaches can sometimes get worse before they get better. If going “cold turkey” isn’t a safe option, doctors will wean patients off the meds to avoid any dangerous health risks.

### SINUS HEADACHES

**Symptoms:** Sinus headache is one of the most common complaints and is characterized by sinus pressure and congestion. The cause can be either viral, bacterial, or allergy-related.

**Treatments:** If it’s bacterial, antibiotics can usually resolve it within a week. Allergy sufferers may benefit from an antihistamine or flushing the sinuses with a neti pot (always use distilled or sterilized water with a neti pot; never use tap water).

### CLUSTER HEADACHES

**Symptoms:** Cluster headaches, sometimes referred to as “suicide headaches,” are a real picnic and are the most painful. They’re more common in men. Pain often occurs around the eyes, temples, back of the head, or in combination in all of these areas. Swollen eyes and tearing, facial sweating, nasal congestion, and restlessness are among the many symptoms that can accompany an attack.

**Treatments:** Acupressure and acupuncture may bring relief. Join a yoga class and learn meditation skills to help with relaxation. Low magnesium is a common link among headache sufferers, so upping your intake of magnesium-rich foods like pumpkin seeds, almonds, chard, and banana could help.

### ICE PICK HEADACHES

**Symptoms:** Also known as stabbing headaches, these involve sudden brief bursts of intense pain, often lasting no more than a few seconds. They’re more common among migraine sufferers, who report experiencing the pain before the onset of a migraine in the same area.

**Treatments:** How do you medicate a flash of pain? Good question. You may have to just grin and bear it. In other words, keep calm and carry on.



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